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BY

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

M.A.

*Author of Philosophers on Holiday,
Morals in World History, Jesus : Myth or History ?
Man His Own Master, etc.*

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	PRELIMINARY: EARLY ISRAEL . . .	1
II.	KINGS, PRIESTS, AND PROPHETS . . .	18
III.	BABYLON AND PERSIA	38
IV.	JEWS AND GREEKS	62
V.	THE MACCABEAN REVOLUTION . . .	79
VI.	ROME CONQUERS THE EAST	97
	INDEX	118

CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY: EARLY ISRAEL

MOST of us are taught in our youth to regard the Bible as a sacred book—that is, a book containing an authoritative revelation from God on the history, duty, and destiny of man. We are taught to accept stories in the Bible as true, because they are in the Bible. We grow up taking for granted that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his brethren, Moses and Aaron were real persons; that the history of the Jews is faithfully reported in the Old Testament; that the prophets wrote the books attributed to them; that Jesus Christ was born at Bethlehem on the first Christmas Day over 1940 years ago, and crucified on the first Good Friday about thirty-three years later; that the apostles and evangelists wrote the books which bear their names; and that that is why there is a Bible and a Christian Church to-day.

In later years most of us react more or less strongly against the beliefs which were taught to us in our youth. We find that we are no longer able to believe in Adam and Eve, the forbidden fruit, the talking snake, Noah's ark, and the rest of it; that we are shocked and revolted by the bloodthirsty stories of Moses, Joshua, David, and other Old Testament worthies; that the Jews compared unfavourably with the Greeks in artistic and intellectual achievement, and with the Romans in constructive and governing ability; that the story of the vicarious sacrifice of the

Son of God to save man from the vengeance of his almighty Father is morally unsatisfying and intellectually childish; and that, in a word, the Bible is not true. The usual result is that we dismiss it as nonsense and never open it again. This is a pity; for a body of literature which has held the imagination of men and women for between two and three thousand years is worthy of study. The reasons which lead us to reject it as a sacred book are perfectly sound, but quite irrelevant to its interest as a set of human documents.

In the last two centuries an enormous amount of new light has been thrown on the Bible by different branches of research. This new light has come, firstly, from the study of the books themselves in their original tongues, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; secondly, from the study of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian monuments contemporary with, or prior to, the events which the Bible relates; thirdly, from the study of natural science; and, fourthly, from the study of primitive institutions and ideas existing among savages in different parts of the world, or persisting as survivals in civilized countries.

The study of the books of the Bible themselves shows that in many cases those books cannot have been written by the authors to whom they are traditionally attributed. The Pentateuch, for example—that is, the first five books of the Bible, from the creation of the world to the death of Moses—is attributed in Jewish tradition and in the New Testament to the authorship of Moses. Scholars who read the Pentateuch with an open mind very soon pointed out that Moses could not have written the account of his

own death (Deut. xxxiv), and that some passages in the Pentateuch refer by anticipation to the later history (e.g., Gen. xxxvi, 31). Moreover, attentive study revealed the fact that the Pentateuch consists of at least four independent works with well-marked characteristics and different tendencies, woven together by an editor or compiler. These are: (1) a work written in a dry, formal style, mainly concerned with the origin of the Jewish priesthood and ritual and usually designated by the letter P (priest); (2) a vividly written narrative with anthropomorphic notions of God and a generally primitive outlook on the world, usually denoted by the letter J; (3) another vividly written narrative, less anthropomorphic, and usually called E; (4) a work comprising most of our Book of Deuteronomy, known as D. The creation story in Gen. i is part of P; J begins in Gen. ii in the middle of verse 4, and tells a different story of creation incompatible with chapter i; E first appears in Gen. xx. The sources are further distinguished by the fact that J from the first denotes the deity by the Hebrew name *Jahveh*, while P and E use the Hebrew word *Elohim* ("God," or more literally "gods") until the early chapters of Exodus, in which *Jahveh* reveals his real name to Moses. Hence the use of the letters J (*Jahvist*) and E (*Elohist*) to denote two of these sources. By attentive study of style and tendency, scholars have been able to prove the composite authorship of many other books of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments.

The study of Egyptian, Babylonian, and Assyrian monuments has revolutionized our knowledge of antiquity. Until the nineteenth century the hiero-

glyphics of Egypt and the cuneiform inscriptions of Babylonia and Assyria (the modern Iraq) were undeciphered, and our sole authority for the history of man prior to the rise of Greek civilization was the Old Testament. The discovery by nineteenth-century archæologists of the key to hieroglyphic and cuneiform characters revealed the existence of ancient civilizations at a date prior to that previously assigned, on the authority of Biblical genealogies, to the creation of man. Moreover, Egyptian and Assyrian monuments enable the history of those civilizations, during the period to which the Old Testament books relate, to be reconstructed with a high degree of accuracy. While there are important points of contact between the Biblical record and the monuments, there are points of at least equal importance in which the monuments not only fail to confirm the Biblical records, but flatly contradict them. We shall note these as we proceed.

The advance of natural science, and especially of geology and biology, finally blew sky-high any authority attached to the Bible on the subject of the origin of man. The origin of species, including the human species, by natural selection in a struggle for existence extending over millions of years is now so abundantly proved by the record of the rocks and fossils that no Biblical scholar with a reputation to lose any longer dreams of defending the six days' creation of Genesis i or the rib story of Genesis ii. But while all who know the meaning of evidence are now convinced of the evolution of man by natural processes from an animal ancestry, many are not prepared to admit that the institutions and ideas, including the religions, of civi-

lized man have evolved by natural processes from those of savagery. Yet in the last eighty years the labours of Bachofen, Kovalevsky, Avebury, Morgan, Tylor, and above all Frazer have put cultural evolution on as firm a scientific basis as Darwin, Huxley, and Haeckel put the evolution of species.

All races of men, however civilized they may be to-day, have passed through a stage at which the family, private property, State, and religion, as we understand them, did not exist. At that stage—the state of savagery and early barbarism—man made considerable technical progress. He developed language, discovered fire, made tools and weapons, and from a food-gatherer became a food-producer. But his tool equipment was still too elementary to produce any appreciable surplus of food over and above that necessary to maintain himself and reproduce his kind. Being ignorant of the nature of paternity, he was not a family man. His only social organization was the clan (Latin *gens*), originally a group of persons claiming common descent in the female line (in those days no other was known), owning land in common, and surviving by dint of mutual aid in the incessant struggle for life. The existence of this early stage of society is attested by the occurrence of mother-right (i.e., the reckoning of descent through the female line only) among such various human groups as the ancient Egyptians, Lycians, Latins, and Picts, and the American Indians; by the evident reminiscence of such a system in the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus; and by the widespread worship of “virgin” mother-goddesses.

If the clan became too big, some of its members

broke off and formed another. Later, a number of kindred clans might combine for protection into a larger unit—a tribe—with a common territory, a common language, and a common war-chief. At this early stage man's ideas of the universe about him are of the sort described by Frazer in *The Golden Bough*. They centre round the processes of food-production and the reproduction of the species. Fire, weapons, plants, and animals are magic and sacred. Rites are practised by tribal medicine-men with the object of controlling the forces of nature and making them do their duty by man. In due course the fact of paternity is grasped; but it is long before father-right displaces mother-right. We have an instance of this in the fact that marriage between children of the same father, but of different mothers, was not at one time considered incestuous. Even in the patriarchal society of the Old Testament Abraham is depicted as marrying Sarah, his father's daughter. Bit by bit man grows in skill and knowledge; he passes from the stone to the bronze and the iron age; he develops agriculture, produces a surplus of food, domesticates animals, and finds that it is more useful to enslave the conquered enemies of the tribe and exploit their labour than to kill and eat them. His social, political, and religious ideas are revolutionized. Man, as the fighting and food-getting sex, asserts his lordship over woman, the mere child-producer and cook, and establishes the patriarchal family with its flocks and herds, household of slaves, and inheritance from father to son. Later the city-State arises, with its walls, its market, its priesthood, and its temple; and civilization begins. In religion, man arrives at

the conception of gods as beings distinct from animals, trees, or other sacred objects. The gods are henceforth magnified men, with the passions and vagaries of men, and susceptible of propitiation by the correct ritual of which the medicine-men, now turned priests, alone hold the secret.

The origin of gods is thus closely related to the origin of class-society and civilization. The savage has totems (sacred animals) and fetishes (sacred objects), but hardly gods. Before man can imagine gods as individuals and not merely as the magic of some animal, tree, or stone, he must be conscious of himself as an individual, and not merely as one of a particular clan or tribe. By the time this can happen, the clan or tribe itself is ripe for submersion in a larger unit, the city-State, kingdom, or nation. The emergence of class society, slavery, the patriarchal family, and the anthropomorphic god presupposes a long process of technical advance, intertribal struggle, and differentiation between conquerors and conquered, covering thousands of years before history begins. History implies written records, and writing is a product of priestly civilizations. Hence the earliest written records presuppose such civilizations. Naturally enough, these grew up first in the fertile river-valleys of the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris, Indus, Ganges, and Yang-tse. Western civilization took its rise from Egypt and Mesopotamia. In these areas thriving city-States, each with its priesthood, its temple, and its god, gradually coalesced into kingdoms before written records began. In Egypt the two kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt fused at the dawn of history, about 3200 B.C., into the great kingdom of the

Pharaohs. In Babylonia (Iraq) the first unified kingdom was not established till about 2750 B.C.; and that was created, not by fusion between native Sumerian kingdoms, but by Semitic conquerors from without.

The Semites, a family of tribes to which the ancient Hebrews, Chaldæans, Phœnicians, Aramæans, and Assyrians, and the modern Arabs belong, originally inhabited the Arabian peninsula. As nomads of the desert they were the natural foes of the settled civilizations of the river valleys, and in the course of history repeatedly invaded and overran Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. The Hyksos, or "foreign¹ kings," who conquered Egypt about 1700 B.C. and were driven out about 1580, were certainly Asiatics, and possibly Semites. Many have thought that the Hyksos domination of Egypt may have given rise to the tradition of the sojourn of the Israelites in that country. Apart from this possibility, there is no evidence, except in the Bible, that Israel was ever in Egypt. Some modern scholars, in fact, think that in the Old Testament there is frequent confusion between *Mizraim* (Egypt) and *Mizrim*, a district in the peninsula of Sinai. After the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Pharaohs of the eighteenth dynasty (sixteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C.) carried their arms into Asia; and Sinai and Palestine long formed part of the Egyptian Empire. Possibly the tradition of Egyptian oppression relates to that period. About 1400 B.C. a people called Habiri are mentioned on the Egyptian monuments as troubling Palestine. They have been identified with the Hebrews, though this is disputed. If the identification is correct, we have here

¹ "Shepherd kings" is a mistranslation.

the first appearance of the Hebrews as such on the scene of history. Their invasion of Palestine was merely one of a long succession of inroads by land-hungry desert tribes into the fertile and civilized regions around them.

There is no earlier history of the Hebrews. Their reputed ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, are not historical figures, but mythical heroes analogous to those of Homer and Hesiod. Originally they appear to have been gods associated with local sanctuaries in Palestine and taken over by the Hebrews after their settlement in that country. The Penta-teuchal narratives, in which they figure as men, were compiled with a religious purpose many centuries after the occupation of Palestine and are of no historical value. Even after the Palestinian settlement it is impossible for a long time to reconcile Hebrew tradition with what we know of the period from Egyptian monuments. We know from the latter that, after the inroads of the Habiri in the fourteenth century, Egyptian rule was re-established in Palestine by the kings of the nineteenth dynasty (fourteenth and thirteenth centuries), and that Pharaoh Merenptah (1225-1198) expressly names Israel among the peoples or lands subdued by him. In fact Egypt did not finally lose Palestine until the twelfth century, when a new horde of invaders, the Philistines from Asia Minor, overran the country. Now the Hebrew writings say nothing of Egyptian conquests during this period, and have no point of contact with the monuments until the Philistine conquest. The explanation is that the Hebrew record of the time (our Book of Judges) was compiled long afterwards, in the sixth century B.C.,

in accordance with a preconceived scheme by which prosperity was the reward of religious zeal and adversity the punishment of religious apostasy. The early history of Israel had to be made to illustrate this scheme by alternating periods of oppression and of freedom. To admit that Israel had not once during the whole period enjoyed unfettered possession of the promised land would have been to spoil the moral.

Worthless as are the early books of the Bible from the point of view of history, they are valuable for the light they throw on the social and religious institutions of the period. From the old sources used by the compilers of these books we can derive much information on the life and culture of the time. We know that there was no systematic extermination of the pre-Israelitish inhabitants such as we read of in the Book of Joshua. On the contrary, the desert tribes settled down among the agricultural population, intermarried with them, and adopted their way of life and their gods. Those earlier settlers, the Canaanites, were in fact an older wave of immigrants from Arabia, closely allied to the Hebrews in race and language, so that fusion was natural and easy. We get a picture of an agricultural and patriarchal state of society, in which the different tribes have not yet coalesced into a kingdom, and in which political leadership is vested in "judges" who are probably no more than local war-chiefs. There is no pretence of monotheism in religion, if we ignore the moralizings of the compiler. The worship of Jahveh, the storm-god of the desert, whom the tribes had brought in with them, was quite compatible with the simultaneous worship of Astarte, the goddess of fertility, and of innumerable local gods

(*baalim*), sacred trees, and family fetishes (*teraphim*) such as are venerated in ancient society generally. Jahveh, in fact, was at this period merely one god among many, a *baal* like the others, and, like them, worshipped with sacred prostitution and human sacrifice. For a storm-god to be also a god of rain and fertility, and propitiated as such, is, after all, not unnatural.

There are many traces in the Old Testament of this conception of Jahveh. He is the rain-god who brings the flood (Gen. vii). The rainbow is the token of his agreement not to bring another (Gen. ix). He blesses the fields (Gen. xxvii, 27). He is appeased by human sacrifice (Judges xi, 30-40; 2 Sam. xxi). He sends fire from heaven to destroy his enemies (Gen. xix; 2 Kings i) or to consume a sacrifice which particularly pleases him (1 Kings xviii; 1 Chron. xxi, 26; 2 Chron. vii, 1). Striking descriptions of Jahveh in the character of a storm-god are to be found in Judges v, 4-5, to which we shall refer later, Ps. xviii, 7-15, and Ps. xxix. The above passages vary much in date, but serve to show the persistence of the traditional picture.

“He rode upon a cherub,¹ and did fly:
Yea, he flew swiftly upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his hiding place, his pavilion
round about him;
Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.
At the brightness before him his thick clouds
passed,
Hailstones and coals of fire.

¹ *Cherub*—a mythical winged monster, the personification of a storm-cloud. It is the same word as “griffin.”

Jahveh also thundered in the heavens,
And the most high uttered his voice;
Hailstones and coals of fire.
And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them."

The Philistine conquest of the twelfth century forced the tribes of Israel to combine against the invader, and led to the emergence of the first national kingdom. The history of the rise, growth, and disruption of that kingdom, as related in the books of Samuel and the early chapters of Kings, lacks corroboration from independent sources. Internal evidence, however, leads the majority of critics to attribute to these records a historical value which they deny to the earlier books. The compiler, though actuated by the same religious motives as in the case of Judges, has preserved a great deal of material, notably in relation to the reign of David, which seems to bear the stamp of historicity. There is, it is true, a radical minority of critics who hold that the whole ancient history of Israel down to the Babylonian exile is the invention of writers of the fifth century and later, who in the interests of religious monotheism "composed an epic of a national past that had never existed."¹ It is difficult, however, to see what propagandist purpose would be served by the invention of such stories as those in which David, the "man after Jahveh's own heart," is depicted as owning household gods (*teraphim*) like any pagan (1 Sam. xix, 13), as guilty of treacherous murder (2 Sam. xi), as offering human sacrifice (2 Sam. xxi), and as ordering the execution of a man whom he had sworn to spare (1 Kings ii,

¹ Whittaker, *Priests, Philosophers, and Prophets*, p. 121.

8-9). Such stories were assuredly not written for edification by the priests of later Judaism. The fact that the writer of 2 Sam. ix-xx and 1 Kings i-ii relates no miracles and shows no "tendency" tells in his favour as a historian. What is certain is that between the twelfth and tenth centuries B.C. the tribes of Israel became a kingdom with a capital, an organized army, a hereditary priesthood, and a temple. Jerusalem, an old Canaanite hill-fortress well known in the Egyptian records of the fourteenth century, was captured by David somewhere about 1000 B.C., and became his capital. For the reign of his son Solomon we lose the guidance of the seemingly authentic chronicler above mentioned, and are at the mercy of exuberant romancers and a moralizing editor. There is no reason, however, to reject the fact that Solomon built the temple and executed other works by forced labour, which precipitated the disruption of the kingdom on his death.

From that disruption (about 930) to the Babylonian exile (586) we are able to check the Books of Kings from time to time by external evidence. The kingdom split into two unequal parts, Israel proper and Judah, the latter comprising only the tribe of that name and its capital, Jerusalem. A rival capital, Samaria, was built in the northern kingdom by Omri early in the ninth century. Omri must have been a considerable figure. Assyrian inscriptions consistently refer to the kingdom of Israel as "the land of Omri." We know from the famous Moabite inscription, discovered in 1868, that Omri made conquests at the expense of the neighbouring kingdom of Moab, which were lost by his successors. This inscription

is important for linguistic and historical reasons. It shows that the Moabite dialect was closely akin to Hebrew, and that the cultural and religious level of the two peoples was much the same. Mesha, the author of the inscription, loots and massacres in the name of his god Chemosh as gleefully as David loots and massacres in the name of his god Jahveh.

But the day was at hand when these little kingdoms were to be fatally involved in the power-politics of their bigger neighbours. Egypt was weak and in decline; but Assyria was on the war-path, spreading terror far and wide in Mesopotamia and Syria, and enriching herself with slaves and loot. In 854 a coalition of Syrian kings, which included Ahab, son of Omri, king of Israel, temporarily stemmed the advance of Shalmaneser III at the battle of Karkar¹—the first certain date in Israelite history. The battle is not mentioned in the Book of Kings, probably because the compiler, who detests Ahab on religious grounds, is unwilling to record any achievement that might reflect credit on that monarch. The alliance did not hold together; and in 842 Jehu, who had raised himself to the throne of Samaria by a massacre of Ahab's family, paid tribute to Shalmaneser.

During this time the kingdom of Judah, from which the Jews take their name, plays a very small part in the story. Modern critics take the view that the tribe of Judah was not originally associated with Israel at all, and only became so through the success of the Jewish bandit, David, in establishing himself as

¹ Shalmaneser's inscription claims the victory. But as he did not follow it up, but had to return to Assyria, he must have had a severe punishing.

king in place of Saul. Certainly in the books of Samuel and Kings, Judah and Israel, even when nominally united under David and Solomon, appear as distinct and often antagonistic communities; and the swift disruption after Solomon's death suggests that the union of the tribes under Jewish hegemony had been a ramshackle affair. If it be true that Judah settled in Palestine later than the other Hebrew tribes and became civilized more slowly than they, we can understand the alacrity with which Israel threw off the yoke of the Davidic kings, and the backward place taken by the latter when no longer able to exact forced labour and tribute from the former.

The art of writing must have been acquired by the Hebrews from the Phœnicians after the settlement in Palestine, but not later than the time of David, who kept a recorder and a scribe among his court officials (2 Sam. viii, 16-17; xx, 24-25). At some date after this, but probably not long after, scribes began to commit to writing the old folk-songs and stories of the Hebrew race. A few of these, often mere fragments, have come down to us embedded in the early books of the Old Testament, though the latter as a whole are much later. Such are the fragments preserved in Num. xxi, 14-15, 17-18, and 27-30, and the pieces quoted from the lost book of Jashar ("book of the upright," or according to others, "book of songs") in Josh. x, 12-13, and 2 Sam. i, 19-27). The most striking of these old songs is that of Deborah in Judges v, celebrating the victory of certain of the Israelite tribes over the Canaanites under Sisera. Whoever may be its author, this song belongs to the

same age as the events described, and may have been handed on by tradition for many generations before it was written down. It breathes throughout the savage spirit of a Bedouin warrior. Jahveh, the storm-god, comes from the desert to aid his people.

“Jahveh, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou marchedst out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water.
The mountains flowed down at the presence of
Jahveh,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jahveh, the god of
Israel.”

The poet describes the distress of Israel; the gathering of the tribes, with praise for those who answered the summons, and gibes and curses for those who did not;¹ the battle and the victory, and the slaughter of Sisera by the woman with whom he sought refuge. In its glee over this violation of hospitality the poem falls short even of Bedouin morality. Then with fierce irony the war-song ends.

“Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
The mother of Sisera through the lattice,
Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?
Her wise ladies answered her,
Yea, she returned answer to herself,
Have they not found, have they not divided the
spoil?
A damsel, two damsels to every man;
To Sisera a spoil of divers colours,

¹ Judah is not even mentioned. At the date of the poem, Judah was not associated with the tribes of Israel.

A spoil of divers colours of embroidery,
Of divers colours of embroidery on both sides, on
the necks of the spoil?

So let all thine enemies perish, O Jahveh:

But let them that love him be as the sun when he
goeth forth in his might."

CHAPTER II

KINGS, PRIESTS, AND PROPHETS

IN all ancient societies an important function attaches to the priest or soothsayer, the person credited with magic power over, or knowledge of, the forces of nature, and maintained by the community in order to control or interpret those ill-understood processes for the common benefit. In early times the priest, who carries out the correct ritual to propitiate the god, and the soothsayer, who announces the will of the god, are one and the same. We see both functions united in the primitive medicine-man—"the oldest artificial or professional class," says Frazer, "in the evolution of society." The king himself is originally the medicine-man or priest of the predominant tribe, as the "divinity that doth hedge a king," whether in ancient Egypt or Babylonia or in modern England, abundantly proves. In course of time, however, the functions of king, priest, and prophet become differentiated and even opposed. When the priesthood of a god becomes hereditary in a particular clan or caste, as that of Jahveh became vested in the Levites, those soothsayers who are not of the favoured class are in an invidious position. Their claim to knowledge of the divine will may be unabated, and may command sufficient credit to gain them a hearing and even a living. But the official priesthood frowns on them; they are given a bad name, and owe their survival and power only to their hold on popular feeling and fanaticism.

From the time of the foundation of the Israelite kingdom and hereditary priesthood, these unofficial prophets (*nebiim*—"speakers," "announcers," or, as others think, "gushers" or "drivellers") begin to be prominent. Originally, as 1 Sam. ix, 9 shows, they were local seers, living on the gifts of people who consulted them. But the oppression exercised by the regular priesthood, and later by the kings and nobles, provoked a resentment which found its natural spokesmen in these rival "men of God." We find them denouncing kings to their faces and playing a part in the disruption of the kingdom and the downfall of the house of Omri, which they could not have done unless popular veneration had rendered them formidable to the throne.

Prophets were not at first peculiarly associated with the worship of Jahveh. All the *baalim* had their prophets: it was a matter of accident by which of them a particular seer claimed to be inspired. But by the ninth century B.C. political developments in Palestine were leading these spokesmen of discontent to adopt Jahveh as their peculiar patron. As Israel became involved in power-politics and in alliances with its neighbours, the gods of neighbouring kingdoms were admitted to the Israelite pantheon, and the official worship absorbed more and more foreign elements. Consequently the prophets, as enemies of the official priesthood, made Jahveh, the god of Israel, into a symbol of revolt against oppression and innovation. Probably the art of writing was as yet confined to court scribes and priests. Consequently the early history of the prophetic movement has come down to us through a mist of legend. Elijah is not so

much a historical figure as an ideal construction by a later generation of what a prophet should be. Into the drab narrative of the compiler of Kings suddenly steps from nowhere this obviously mythical personage, smiting the land with three years' drought, fed by ravens, miraculously multiplying stores of food, raising the dead, calling down fire from heaven, and finally ascending to heaven himself in a chariot of fire. In spite of the supernatural setting, these chapters (1 Kings xvii-xix and xxi; 2 Kings i, 2-17, and ii) are among the greatest in the Old Testament. They reflect, not the biography of a man, but the myth-making genius of a popular movement, which saw in such kings as Ahab with his Phœnician queen, Phœnician gods, land-grabbing habits, and ivory palace nothing but personified evil, and pitted against that evil a prophet of miraculous powers whose very name, Elijah ("Jahveh is God"), is a party slogan, roared in chorus by the people as they slay the prophets of Baal. Elisha, the next hero of the prophetic saga, is hardly more historical. Many of his miracles are duplicates of those of Elijah. The residuum of fact behind the legends is the emergence of an opposition party, centring round the dervish-seers of the Jordan valley, who combated class oppression and foreign customs, and in the name of Jahveh demanded a return to the simplicity of their nomad ancestors. The social struggle has left its mark on the narratives in more ways than one. In the scene on Horeb, where Jahveh is heard, not in the wind, the earthquake, or the fire, but in a still small voice, we have a repudiation of the savage nature-god in favour of a new conception of deity. The story of Naboth's vineyard, which soon

follows, shows that in this new conception Jahveh was identified with the rights of the weak against the strong.

There is much difference of opinion as to the date at which the prophetic party began to commit its propaganda to writing. Some critics deny that we possess any Hebrew literature at all dating from the period of the kings. For reasons already given this position seems too sweeping. Most critics agree that by the ninth century many old folk-songs, such as the Song of Deborah, were already written down, together with the Davidic history of 2 Sam. ix-xx and 1 Kings i-ii and some of the traditional folk-lore now included in the Pentateuch—for example, the stories in J of the creation of man (Gen. ii, 4b-25), the garden of Eden, Cain and his descendants, the tower of Babel, many of the patriarchal legends, and some account of an escape from Egyptian oppression and a period of desert life before the invasion of Canaan.¹ The Pentateuch as we have it, however, is so much worked over by later editors that it is very difficult to recover this early stratum. It was polytheistic (notice the use of "us" in Gen. iii, 22, and xi, 7) and had no flood story. Its purpose was to relate the origin of men and women, of death, of the arts and crafts, of languages, of the Hebrew tribes, and of various local sanctuaries and cults in Palestine. In addition, there appear to have existed chronicles of the kings of Israel and Judah from Solomon onwards which have perished, but of which the compiler of our Book of

¹ According to one modern view, the scene of the oppression was originally laid in *Mizrim* in the Sinai peninsula, which later scribes confused with *Mizraim* (Egypt).

Kings made use. The stories of Elijah and Elisha, now embodied in Kings, are the earliest extant writings emanating from the prophetic party, and probably date from the late ninth and early eighth centuries B.C. It is possible that they mark the first spread of literacy in Palestine outside the ranks of priests and court officials.

By the middle of the eighth century the petty states of Syria, weakened by incessant mutual wars, were ripe for absorption in the growing Assyrian Empire. From the time of Jehu (842) the kings of Israel had found it expedient from time to time to appease that predatory power with tribute and to enlist its support against the rival kingdom of Damascus. The prophetic party were now as disaffected to the house of Jehu as they had been to the house of Omri. As doom lowered on the kingdoms about them, their tone became more extreme and irreconcilable. Elijah and Elisha—or the scribes who wrote their stories—had denounced the intrusion of foreign gods and foreign ways: the eighth-century opposition denounced the national cult itself. The prophecies of Amos and Hosea, the earliest which have come down to us under their authors' names, are regarded by a majority of critics as, in the main, genuine.¹ Amos, a peasant driven by the wrongs of his class to don the prophet's mantle, fulminates against the usury, extortion, and other oppression of the time with an eloquence unsurpassed in Biblical literature, and

¹ Those critics who view the entire prophetic literature as a product of the fourth, third, and second centuries B.C. do not explain why forgers should father their works on obscure persons of whom nothing was known, rather than on famous figures like Elijah or Elisha.

predicts the utter destruction of kingdom and priesthood.

“ Thus saith Jahveh :

For three transgressions of Israel, yea, for four,

I will not turn away the punishment thereof;

Because they have sold the righteous for silver,

And the needy for a pair of shoes :

That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor,

And turn aside the way of the meek . . .

Behold, I will press you in your place,

As a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.

And flight shall perish from the swift,

And the strong shall not strengthen his force,

Neither shall the mighty deliver his life :

Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow ;

And he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself :

Neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver his life :

And he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day, saith Jahveh . . .

And I will smite the winter house with the summer house ;

And the houses of ivory shall perish,

And the great houses shall have an end, saith Jahveh.

. . . Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor,

And take exactions from him of wheat :

Ye have built houses of hewn stone,

But ye shall not dwell in them ;

Ye have planted pleasant vineyards,

But ye shall not drink the wine thereof.

For I know how manifold are your transgressions,

And how mighty are your sins ;

Ye that afflict the just, that take a bribe,

And that turn aside the needy in the gate . . .
 I hate, I despise your feasts,
 And I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
 Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and
 meal offerings, I will not accept them:
 Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat
 beasts.
 Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs;
 For I will not hear the melody of thy viols.
 But let judgment roll down as waters,
 And righteousness as a mighty stream."

Hosea, with less eloquence but more pathos, utters the same denunciations. Later scribes took it upon themselves to temper the unrelieved gloom of these prophecies by inserting predictions of the return from captivity and of future prosperity, so that both Amos and Hosea have come down to us much interpolated.

To prophesy the doom of kingdoms at such a time required no supernatural gifts. In 738 Menahem of Israel once more bought off Assyria with a heavy tribute. In 734 a war between Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus on the one side and Ahaz of Judah on the other brought Assyria into the field again. Tiglath Pileser III, appealed to by Ahaz, marched south, invaded Israel, carried a large part of its people captive to Assyria, and put an end to the kingdom of Damascus. As the price of his help, Judah became a tributary state of the Assyrian Empire.

To the crisis of 734 belongs a story preserved in Isa. vii. According to this the prophet Isaiah encouraged Ahaz to stand firm by declaring that any Jewish child born at that time might be named by its mother Immanuel ("God with us"), since before the child

knew how to tell good food from bad, the two enemy kingdoms, Damascus and Samaria, would be desolate. The prediction, if made, obviously referred to the immediate situation. Eight hundred or more years later, however, the writer of a Christian Gospel twisted it to his purpose by translating the Hebrew word *almah*, which simply means "young woman," as "virgin," and pretending that Isaiah prophesied the birth of Christ. The Church still keeps up the pretence.

Damascus fell in 732. After the death of Tiglath Pileser, Hoshea, whom he had put on the throne of Samaria, joined with other petty kings in a revolt against Assyria. Shalmaneser V immediately besieged Samaria, but died before he could reduce it. It fell to Sargon, his successor, in 722. Twenty-seven thousand Israelites were deported to Assyria and replaced by settlers from other parts of the Empire. So ended the kingdom of Israel. The clearance of inhabitants, however, was only partial. Enough were left to perpetuate the Israelite name, and the new settlers were by degrees absorbed and adopted the worship of Jahveh.

The downfall of the Israelite kingdom must have increased considerably the prestige of the prophetic party. At some date before the fall of Samaria, scribes of that party appear to have begun a revision of the old Hebrew folk-lore in the interests of their propaganda. The polytheistic features of the popular tales were pruned away, and the conception of Jahveh dignified and ethicized. Two of these recensions, one (J) emanating from Judah and one (E) from Israel, are embodied in the later Pentateuch. It is

impossible to say how far their revision had gone at the date we have reached. But it is certain that by the seventh century the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, the Egyptian oppression and the exodus under Moses, had already been put into monotheistic shape.

Of the two Hebrew kingdoms in Palestine only Judah now remained, and Judah was a vassal of Assyria. The effect of the fall of Samaria was to throw Hezekiah, who succeeded Ahaz as king of Judah, into the arms of the prophetic party, and to give its spokesmen an influence which they had never before possessed. The two leading prophets of this time, Isaiah and Micah, have given their names to two Old Testament books, both of which have been heavily interpolated and supplemented with later matter. In fact only about sixteen of the sixty-six chapters of Isaiah, and three of the seven chapters of Micah, are considered by the majority of scholars to contain any matter whatever by the prophets concerned. Micah, an inspired peasant of the type of Amos, denounces the oppression and corruption of the rich and foretells the destruction of Jerusalem. Isaiah, a citizen of Jerusalem with considerable influence at court, inveighs with an eloquence equal to that of Amos against the temple cult, the "grinding of the face of the poor" by land-grabbers, the drunkenness of men and the luxury of women.

"Hear the word of Jahveh, ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of
Gomorrah.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices
unto me? saith Jahveh:

I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat
of fed beasts;

And I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of
lambs, or of he-goats.

When ye come to appear before me,

Who hath required this at your hand, to trample my
courts?

Bring no more vain oblations;

Incense is an abomination unto me;

New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies,—

I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my
soul hateth:

They are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear
them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide
mine eyes from you:

Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not
hear:

Your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean;

Put away the evil of your doings from before mine
eyes;

Cease to do evil: learn to do well;

Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed,

Judge the fatherless, plead for the widow . . .

Woe unto them that join house to house,

That lay field to field,

Till there be no more room,

And ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the
land! . . .

Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning,
that they may follow strong drink;

That tarry late into the night, till wine inflame
them! . . .

Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine,

And men of strength to mingle strong drink:

Which justify the wicked for a reward,

And take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!

Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble,
And as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame,

So their root shall be as rottenness,

And their blossom shall go up as dust:

Because they have rejected the law of Jahveh, God of hosts,

And despised the word of the holy one of Israel."

These passages are from the first five chapters of Isaiah, which are thought by most critics to be mainly genuine, though even they have suffered interpolation. The prophecies in Isaiah and Micah which foretell a golden age of peace in the future are the work of a later generation. Whether the fulminations of these prophets led to any improvement in the lot of their poorer countrymen is not recorded; but they seem to have induced Hezekiah to carry out some religious reforms of an iconoclastic nature. In return the prophetic party gave him their moral support in his revolt against Assyria.

Sargon, the conqueror of Samaria, was assassinated in 705 and succeeded by his son, Sennacherib. The new king of Assyria was immediately faced with a general revolt, in which Babylon, under the Chaldæan king Merodach Baladan, and a number of Arabian, Syrian, and Palestinian States, including Judah, were associated. Sennacherib, after reducing Babylonia, marched in 701 against Syria and Palestine. The little States submitted or were reconquered. According to Sennacherib's own account he carried two hundred thousand Jews into captivity, besieged Hezekiah in Jerusalem "like a bird in a cage," and

forced him to pay a heavy indemnity. So far the Jewish account in 2 Kings xviii, 13-16, bears out Sennacherib. But there agreement ceases. The Book of Kings goes on to relate how Sennacherib, after receiving the indemnity, sent three of his chief officers to Jerusalem with a great army and a peremptory summons to surrender; how Hezekiah, on the advice of Isaiah, defied Sennacherib; and how "the angel of Jahveh went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." Sennacherib says nothing of all this, and proceeds to relate the successful suppression next year of a new revolt in Babylonia. The story of the miraculous deliverance of the Jews appears to be derived from a biography of Isaiah, and bears a suspicious resemblance to the miraculous stories of Elijah and Elisha. A prophetic narrator naturally could not admit that the reign of so pious a king as Hezekiah, with so great a prophet as Isaiah to advise him, ended in disaster. Yet there may be a foundation for the story. The Greek historian Herodotus relates that when "Sanacharibus, king of the Arabians and Assyrians," marched on Egypt, the Egyptians were saved by a multitude of field-mice, which gnawed the bowstrings, quivers, and shield-handles of the invading army. Sanacharibus is plainly Sennacherib. Possibly a later expedition to Palestine and Egypt, not mentioned in his inscriptions, met with a setback of which neither angels nor mice, but the germs of plague or dysentery, were the cause, and the magnitude of which was exaggerated by Egyptian priests and Jewish prophets.

The ascendancy of the prophetic party in Judah ended with the death of Hezekiah. Under his son, Manasseh, Jahveh was worshipped with human sacrifice and sacred prostitution as of old. Politically Judah remained part of the Assyrian Empire. In 670 Esarhaddon, the son of Sennacherib, conquered Egypt and raised Assyria to the zenith of its greatness. Thenceforward, however, the decline of Assyria was rapid. Under Assurbanipal, the son of Esarhaddon, Egypt recovered its independence with the help of Carian and Greek mercenaries—the first intervention of Greeks in the affairs of the great Oriental empires. A group of tribes who had till then played little part in history, the Aryan-speaking nomads of the northern steppes—whom the Greeks called Scythians—now began to disturb western Asia. One of these tribes, the Medes, built up a powerful kingdom in western Iran and threatened Assyria from the east. Other Scythian tribes followed the Medes southward, invaded Assyria, and overran Syria and Palestine as far as the borders of Egypt. By the last quarter of the seventh century the Assyrian Empire was tottering to its fall.

These world-shaking events gave a new impetus to the prophetic movement in Palestine. The old Israelite religion, the worship of nature-gods who delivered the goods if you followed the correct ritual, had never been so discredited. First the Assyrian armies, and now, after an interval of uneasy peace, the savages of the north, had swept over the land, killing, plundering, and burning. The prophetic writings relating to that time—Zephaniah and the early chapters of Jeremiah—have been so worked over by later writers that it is very difficult to reconstruct the

original. But even from the edited text we possess, we can gather the terror inspired by the "seething cauldron from the north," and the alacrity with which the prophets laid the blame on the polytheistic official cult (Jer. i, 13-19; Zeph. i). Even the priests of Jerusalem saw the inevitability of reformation, and resolved to turn it to their advantage.

In 621, we are told in the Book of Kings, Hilkiah, the high priest, sent word to Josiah, the young king of Judah, that he had "found the book of the law in the house of Jahveh." Josiah, when this book had been read to him by his secretary, rent his clothes and consulted a prophetess, Huldah, who endorsed the contents of the book. Josiah then instituted a drastic reformation of religion in Judah and in Samaria, which in the confusion of the time seems to have accepted his authority. Polytheistic worship was suppressed, idols were destroyed, sacred prostitution and human sacrifice forbidden, and all local sanctuaries desecrated. Worship was to be centralized at Jerusalem, and the only cult permitted was to be a purified cult of Jahveh.

The book found in the temple and read to Josiah is considered by most critics to have consisted of chapters v-xxvi and xxviii of our Book of Deuteronomy.¹ It purports to be a transcript of laws given to Israel by Moses, more than eight hundred years earlier. It opens with a recital of the ten commandments given to Israel by Jahveh in person on Horeb. These, though familiar to us, were almost certainly

¹ The title "Deuteronomy" dates from the Greek translation made centuries later. The original work seems to have been called simply "the book of the law."

new to the Jews of the seventh century B.C.¹ Then comes an eloquent statement of monotheism which has become the *credo* of orthodox Judaism down to this day. "Hear, O Israel: Jahveh our God is one Jahveh: and thou shalt love Jahveh thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. . . . Unto Jahveh thy God belongeth the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that therein is. . . . Thou shalt fear Jahveh thy God; him shalt thou serve; and to him shalt thou cleave, and by his name shalt thou swear. . . . Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; the blessing, if ye shall hearken unto the commandments of Jahveh your God, which I command you this day; and the curse, if ye shall not hearken unto the commandments of Jahveh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known." After this preamble comes the detailed code, partly based on a slightly older code preserved in Exod. xxi-xxiii, but with considerable amendment and amplification. The code of Deuteronomy has three main preoccupations. Its first concern is the rigorous enforcement of monotheism. Canaanite sanctuaries are to be destroyed. Jahveh, the one God, is to be worshipped in one place alone, without images or emblems of any kind. Apostasy is to be punished with death. The

¹ There are two versions of the decalogue, one in Exod. xx and one in Deut. v. They differ in the reason given for keeping the sabbath, and in some minor details. Neither can be older than the seventh century; and the Exodus decalogue in its present form cannot be older than the sixth. The sabbath, which in Deuteronomy is ordained for humane reasons, is in Exod. xx made coeval with the creation to correspond with Gen. ii, 1-3 (P).

second concern is the maintenance of a priesthood and ritual. Directions are given for the payment of the Levites—the hereditary priests—in kind or money, and for the due provision of sacrificial animals and observance of festivals. The third concern of the code is social justice. Usury is forbidden. Once in seven years all debts between Israelites are to be cancelled, and all Israelite slaves are to be freed. Run-away slaves are not to be returned to their masters. The peasant's holding and stock are not to be seized for debt. Widows, orphans, and even necessitous aliens are to share with the priests in the tithes paid every third year. Military service is to be voluntary. The king is not to be a despot with a harem and a standing army, but a people's king bound by law (xvii, 14–20). “Justice, justice shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which Jahveh thy God giveth thee.” The book concludes by enumerating, in chapter xxviii, the blessings which are to attend the observance of the code and the curses which are to follow its infraction. Chapters i–iv, xxvii, and xxix–xxxiv are by other hands.

No scholar now believes that this work dates back to the time of Moses. The circumstances of its discovery and promulgation shriek of pious fraud. Evidently Hilkiah and his colleagues, discredited in the public eye by their inability to prevent the calamities of the time, decided to placate their opponents, the prophets, by adopting their programme of religious reformation and social justice on condition that the interests of the Jerusalem priesthood were safeguarded. The suppression of local sanctuaries would in fact serve those interests by diverting tithes and offerings

to Jerusalem. Yet, forgery as it is, Deuteronomy is one of the most remarkable books ever published. Monotheism, indeed, was not the invention of its authors or of the prophets who preceded them. As great empires arose by the fusion or conquest of city-States, it was natural that the priests of conquering cities such as Babylon and Thebes should come to think of their own god as the only real god, and of the gods of other cities as inferior imitations. Seven centuries before Deuteronomy was written the Egyptian king Akhenaten had tried to supersede the worship of the other gods by that of Aten, the sun-god, but had failed completely. What was new in the propaganda of the Jewish prophets and in Deuteronomy was the association of monotheism with the interests, not of kings or conquerors, but of the poor and oppressed. By becoming linked with a charter of social justice, monotheism acquired a motive power, a leverage, and a fanaticism which in centuries to come helped it to conquer the world.

The prophetic party were soon disillusioned. As was to be expected, the priests of Jerusalem put into force that part of the Deuteronomic programme which was to their advantage—namely, the suppression of rival sanctuaries—and let the social charter slide. Jeremiah, in a probably genuine passage, seems to denounce the book as a fraud.

“ How do ye say, We are wise,
And the law of Jahveh is with us?
But behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought
falsely.

The wise men are ashamed,
They are dismayed and taken:

Lo, they have rejected the word of Jahveh;
And what manner of wisdom is in them?"

In 612 the Medes and Chaldæans captured and destroyed Nineveh, and the Assyrian Empire was a thing of the past. The short prophecy of Nahum contains a pæan of joy over the downfall of the "bloody city"—the butcher-bird of Asia. Necho, king of Egypt, marched north to claim his share of Assyrian territory. Josiah, opposing him, was defeated and killed at Megiddo in northern Palestine in 608. Setting aside Jehoahaz, whom the people had chosen to be king, Necho installed Josiah's eldest son, Jehoiakim, as king in the Egyptian interest, and after imposing a tribute on the Jews, proceeded on his expedition. This ended in the defeat of Necho in 605 at Carchemish on the Euphrates by the Chaldæans under Nebuchadnezzar. The former Assyrian Empire was partitioned between the Medes and the Chaldæans, the northern half falling to the Medes, and the southern half, including Syria and Palestine, to the new Chaldæan or Babylonian Empire.

The defeat and death of Josiah put an end to the policy of reformation. Under Jehoiakim the return or continuance of old abuses drove the prophetic party into violent opposition. The short book of Habakkuk, if genuine, and the invectives of Jeremiah provide a running commentary on the last agony of the Jewish kingdom. Unfortunately the work of Jeremiah, most human of prophets, has come down to us in a fragmentary and confused state, with very little chronological arrangement and many interpolations. Those passages which seem to be genuine express the passionate despair of a frustrated reformer.

" Shall I not visit for these things? saith Jahveh:
 Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as
 this? "

He denounces fiercely the forced labour imposed by
 Jehoiakim.

" Woe to him that buildeth his house by unrighte-
 ousness,
 And his chambers by injustice;
 That useth his neighbour's service without wages,
 And giveth him not his hire;
 That saith, I will build me a wide house and spacious
 chambers,
 And cutteth him out windows;
 And it is ceiled with cedar,
 And painted with vermilion . . .
 Therefore thus saith Jahveh concerning Jehoiakim
 the son of Josiah, king of Judah:
 They shall not lament for him, Ah my brother! or
 Ah sister!
 They shall not lament for him, Ah lord! or Ah his
 glory!
 He shall be buried with the burial of an ass,
 Drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jeru-
 salem."

In 597 Jehoiakim's revolt against Nebuchadnezzar
 led to the investment of Jerusalem by a Chaldæan
 army. Jehoiakim died during the siege and, contrary
 to the prophecy of Jeremiah, " slept with his fathers."
 His son, Jehoiachin, was forced to surrender and was
 deported to Babylon with a large number of Jews and
 much treasure. Zedekiah, a younger son of Josiah,
 was installed as king by Nebuchadnezzar in the
 Chaldæan interest. Jeremiah urged submission to
 the conqueror. But Zedekiah too, relying on Egyp-

tian help, revolted, and so brought about a second siege of Jerusalem, which lasted eighteen months. In 586 the city was captured and destroyed by the Chaldæans; a fresh consignment of Jews, all in fact but the poorest peasants, were deported to Babylonia; and the kingdom of Judah ceased to exist.¹

If the Jews of the sixth century had been merely what their ancestors had been—a handful of Bedouin who had swooped down on a fertile stretch of country and been welded into a kingdom by war—that would have been the end of them. Such petty, predatory kingdoms, in the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries B.C., went down by the dozen before the great robber-empires of Assyria and Babylonia, and were never heard of again. But the internal struggle in the Israelitish and Jewish kingdoms—the struggle between kings, priests, and usurers on the one hand and the oppressed people on the other—had called into being a prophetic movement with a religious background and a power of mass appeal, antagonistic to kingdom and priesthood, and able to survive the ruin of both.

¹ The Book of Lamentations, though ascribed to Jeremiah by tradition, is not his. The ascription seems to have arisen from a misinterpretation of 2 Chron. xxxv, 25. The Lamentations may be contemporary with Jeremiah; but the obscurity of much of later Jewish history makes it uncertain whether they relate to some later catastrophe than that of 586.

CHAPTER III

BABYLON AND PERSIA

BABYLONIA, the country to which the captive Jews were transplanted, was, with the possible exception of Egypt, the oldest seat of civilization in the world. In the third millennium B.C. the various city-States—Eridu, Nippur, Babylon, Ur, Accad, etc.—had fallen under the sway of Semitic conquerors and become a kingdom. Towards the end of that millennium Babylon had become the chief city under its king Hammurabi. Babylon was then already a flourishing centre of trade, where land, houses, cattle, and slaves were bought and sold, money lent at interest, and insolvent debtors reduced to slavery. The necessity of keeping accounts of such transactions led the Babylonians to invent a numerical notation and laid the foundations of mathematics. The famous code of laws compiled by Hammurabi, and preserved in an inscription to this day, is an attempt to regulate by enactment the multifarious disputes and abuses of this complex class society. The greater part of the code remained in force in Babylonia long after Babylon itself had crumbled into ruin. In the fourteenth century B.C. Babylon was ousted from its supremacy by Assyria, and thenceforward played a secondary rôle in Mesopotamia until the decline of the Assyrian Empire in the seventh century. Then, as we have seen, under a new Chaldæan dynasty Babylon recovered its independence and joined the Medes in the destruction

of Nineveh. Under Nebuchadnezzar (604-561) the Babylonian Empire attained a degree of power, wealth, and splendour never reached before, and the temples, palaces, walls, and gardens of Babylon became one of the wonders of the world.

Along with a relatively advanced economic and legal system, Babylon preserved intact a great deal of primitive ritual and myth. The deities of Babylonia, as of other early societies, were personifications of nature—Ishtar, the fertility-goddess of Erech; Ea, the fish-god of Eridu; Marduk or Merodach, the sun-god of Babylon; and so forth. The ascendancy of Babylon over the other cities caused its patron god, Marduk, to acquire a prestige superior to that of the other gods, and in course of time to be invested with many of their attributes and to annex much of their ritual. Long before the time of Nebuchadnezzar the priests of Babylon were no doubt secretly monotheists, holding Marduk to be the only real god, but perpetuating the cults of the rest as a necessary concession to local patriotism and tradition.

The Jews, even before the exile, had been deeply influenced by Babylonian ideas. Jewish folk-lore owes to Babylonia, directly or indirectly, the myths of the creation, the fall of man, and the flood in the early chapters of Genesis, though all have been revised in accordance with later Jewish monotheism. In the Babylonian creation myth, Tiamat, the primeval dragon, is cloven in two by Marduk, who makes the heaven out of one half and the earth out of the other. In Genesis i (derived from source P, written after the exile) Tiamat has become *tehom* ("the deep"); and God by a mere word divides "the waters from the

waters." In the Babylonian story of the origin of death, Adapa is tricked by the god Ea into abstaining from the food of the gods which would have made him immortal. In Genesis iii (derived from source J, which is pre-exilic) Adam is ejected from Eden lest he should eat of the tree of life and live for ever. In the Babylonian flood story, the god Ea warns the hero Ut-Napishtim to build a ship to escape the flood which the gods are sending. Ut-Napishtim with his family and animals of all kinds escape in the ship, while all outside it perish. Ut-Napishtim sends out successively a dove, a swallow, and a raven, and when the raven does not return, leaves the ship and sacrifices to the gods, who smell the savour and "gather like flies about the sacrifice." In Genesis vi-ix (partly pre-exilic, but worked over and interpolated after the exile) the place of Ut-Napishtim is taken by Noah, who seems to have been originally not a flood-hero at all, but a culture-hero—the inventor of wine. The ship becomes in the Hebrew myth an ark or chest; the birds are sent out in a different order; and the polytheism of the original is suppressed. It is possible, too, that Nimrod, mentioned as the founder of Babylon in Genesis x, 8-12, may have been originally Marduk or Merodach—the name of the Babylonian god having been deliberately mangled by later Jewish copyists.

Some of the Jewish laws contained in Exodus xxi-xxiii and Deuteronomy are certainly based on the Hammurabi code—e.g., the principle of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Exod. xxi, 24; Deut. xix, 21), and the penalties for burglary, trespass, perjury, and other offences. But it is false to say, with some critics, that the additions made to the Hammurabi code in

Exodus and Deuteronomy are merely theological.¹ The Babylonian code provides for the return of runaway slaves to their owners, on pain of death for the harbourer: Deuteronomy provides that they are not to be returned at all. Hammurabi provides for compulsory military service on a feudal basis: Deuteronomy provides for voluntary service. Hammurabi limits the rate of interest: the Jewish code forbids interest altogether. The real difference between the two codes is that one is the work of a priest-king, holding the scales of justice evenly, as he sees it, between social classes, while the other is the programme of an opposition party, tilting the balance—especially in Deuteronomy—in favour of the peasant and slave. It is very doubtful how far the social side of the Jewish law was ever put in force.

The relations between the Babylonian authorities and the exiled Jews—or at least the prophetic party among the latter—were at first good. The fall of the Jewish kingdom had been in a sense a triumph for that party. The polytheism of Babylonia could not possibly be more offensive to them than that which had prevailed at Jerusalem down to its last days. The lot of the exiles was not hard by the standards of Asiatic civilization. They were settled on the land and left to themselves, subject doubtless to the payment of a tax to the Babylonian government. The stories of persecution contained in the Book of Daniel were written four hundred years later for another generation faced with other problems, and have no foundation whatever in the circumstances of Nebuchadnezzar's time.

¹ Edwards, *The Hammurabi Code*, pp. 115–119.

The prophetic party among the exiles set themselves to the work of organizing the Jews, not into a State, which was no longer possible, but into a religious community. The writings of the exiled priest Ezekiel reflect the conditions of the time. Ezekiel, like Jeremiah, wastes no sympathy on the fallen kingdom of Judah. In the early chapters of the book, Jahveh, in a chariot drawn by cherubim, appears personally to Ezekiel and informs him in elaborate symbolism that Jerusalem is doomed for her idolatry.¹ In viii we have a detailed description of the worship in the temple as Ezekiel knew it—a cult of animal-gods, of the corn-spirit Tammuz, and of the sun-god. Throughout the first half of the book the changes are rung on the theme of destruction. In xxv–xxxii the petty kingdoms surrounding Judah, then Tyre, Sidon, and finally Egypt, are threatened with the same doom that befell Judah. These latter prophecies belong to the years following the fall of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar reduced Phœnicia and invaded Egypt. Unnecessary doubt has been thrown on the authenticity of these chapters, and indeed of the whole book, on the ground that Nebuchadnezzar did not destroy Tyre as predicted by Ezekiel. But Ezekiel himself admits as much (xxix, 17–20); and the non-fulfilment of a prophecy seems a poor ground for denying that it was uttered. In the closing chapters of the book Ezekiel lets himself dream of a happier future, when Israel will dwell again in its own country under a just king. A new temple will be built (the homesick priest

¹ The visions in Ezekiel are a literary artifice. So too, one trusts, is the repulsive symbolism used in iv to portray the hunger of the besieged.

dwells lovingly on every detail of its architecture); Jahveh will be worshipped with a purified ritual which Ezekiel prescribes; the land will be fertilized by a river flowing from the temple to the Dead Sea; and the tribes of Israel, in which resident aliens are henceforth included, will be allotted equal portions of their restored homeland. It is a priest's Utopia, and reads tediously after the revolutionary fire of the older prophets. It is noteworthy that Ezekiel relegates the Levites, the hereditary priests of the fallen kingdom, to menial functions in the restored sanctuary, and limits the priesthood to the single family of Zadok.

Other writers, influenced by the prophets and Deuteronomy, set out to rewrite the whole record of the Hebrew past in the light of prophetic propaganda. Deuteronomy itself was amplified by a narrative preface (i-iv) and peroration (xxix-xxx), and afterwards dovetailed into the collection of old folk-lore and legend which had been begun and more than once revised in the time of the kings. The collection, thus enlarged, is called by critics JED. A code of ritual and moral laws (H) contained in Leviticus xvii-xxvi may also date from this time. It shows strong affinities with Ezekiel; but critics differ as to which of these writers influenced the other. Lastly, the history from the settlement of Israel in Palestine to the exile was cast into the form in which it stands in our books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings by a compiler who, as we saw in dealing with the period, had no scruple in forcing facts into conformity with his preconceived theory of retributive justice. We are able to date his work within a few years. He records the release of the captive Jewish king Jehoiachin by Evil-Merodach,

the son of Nebuchadnezzar, in 561. But he does not mention the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539, which he could hardly have failed to do if it had already occurred. The compilation must therefore have been made between those two dates.

The death of Nebuchadnezzar was followed by a succession of palace revolutions which ended by placing on the throne Nabonidus (555-539), an industrious antiquarian to whose inscriptions we owe a great deal of our knowledge of Babylonian history, but who made himself obnoxious to the local priesthoods by trying to centralize the religion of Babylonia in the capital. Meanwhile in 553 an upheaval took place in the neighbouring Median Empire. A vassal prince named Cyrus, whose people, the Persians, were akin to the Medes and occupied a small territory round Susa, led a successful revolt and soon made himself master of Media. The other Oriental empires, Babylonia, Egypt, and Lydia, formed an alliance to crush Cyrus. The Persian struck quickly, conquered Lydia in 546, reduced the Greek cities of Asia Minor, and by 539 was closing in on Babylon. Nabonidus fled, and Cyrus entered the city without resistance.

The Persians, who thus became in a few years masters of western Asia, were a hardy race of warriors and peasants, new to civilization and not yet spoilt by conquests. Their early religion, like that of other peoples, consisted of a magic ritual designed to control or propitiate the powers of nature. The very word "magic," in fact, is derived from the hereditary priests of ancient Iran, the Magi. They attached special sanctity to fire, and, like the Babylonians, told a story of a battle between the sun-god and a

primeval serpent. At a date which cannot be determined with certainty, but which must have been after the Aryan invaders had settled down in Iran, the Magian religion underwent a development which is traditionally associated with the name of Zoroaster. Whether Zoroaster was a historical personage or a mythical cult-founder like Moses we do not know. We have no ancient Persian literature except inscriptions, and they do not refer to him. Herodotus, who describes in some detail the Persian customs of the fifth century B.C., does not mention him. Plato in the fourth century names him once as the founder of Magianism. The only writings attributed to Zoroaster are hymns preserved in the Zend-Avesta, a sacred book compiled in the third and fourth centuries A.D. What is certain is that by the sixth century B.C. the Magi had evolved a theology in which Ahura Mazda, "the wise lord," the god of light and truth and the patron of the hard-working peasant, does battle with Angra Mainyu, "the destructive spirit" of darkness and lies, the patron of marauding nomads and noxious animals. On the side of Ahura Mazda are such kindly spirits as the sun-god Mithra, the gods of corn and wine, and all men of goodwill: on the side of Angra Mainyu are the devils whom the nomads worship. The battle is not endless: Ahura Mazda will finally defeat Angra Mainyu. Then those who fought the good fight will live again and enjoy everlasting sunshine, while those who helped Angra Mainyu will be consigned with him to everlasting darkness and torment.

There are obvious resemblances, as well as differences, between Zoroastrianism and the religion

preached by the Jewish prophets. With deeper roots in peasant life, and therefore less uncompromisingly monotheistic, Zoroastrianism goes farther than the prophets in promising a future life with rewards and punishments beyond the grave. We shall see in due course that this side of Persian religion profoundly influenced later Judaism and through it Christianity; but this influence had not begun in the sixth century. Both religions agreed in rejecting the representation of deity by images.

As Cyrus marched on Babylon, the hopes of the Jews rose high. They saw in him a deliverer who would restore them to their own land and make possible the building up of that new order, founded on justice, to which the prophets and Deuteronomy had taught them to look forward. Their expectations found expression in the writings of a Babylonian Jew who, probably for reasons of prudence, chose to remain anonymous, but whose work was eventually appended to the Book of Isaiah and erroneously attributed to that prophet (Isa. xl-xlviii). The writer opens exultantly in a passage rendered familiar to us by the use made of it in the New Testament and in Handel's *Messiah*.

“ Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.
Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem,
And cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished,
That her iniquity is pardoned,
That she hath received of Jahveh double for all her
sins.

The voice of one that crieth,
Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jahveh,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be exalted,

And every mountain and hill shall be made low:
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
And the glory of Jahveh shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together:
For the mouth of Jahveh hath spoken it."

Jahveh, the one true God, not to be bribed with offerings or represented by images, has sent Cyrus to destroy Babylon and deliver Israel. In a striking passage the prophet identifies the Persian Ahura Mazda with Jahveh. But he repudiates the dualism of Zoroaster. Light and darkness, good and evil, are created by one and the same God.

"Who hath raised up one from the east,
Whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot?
He giveth nations before him,
And maketh him rule over kings;
He giveth them as the dust to his sword,
As the driven stubble to his bow . . .
I have raised up one from the north, and he is
come;
From the rising of the sun one that calleth upon
my name:
And he shall come upon rulers as upon mortar,
And as the potter treadeth clay . . .
Thus saith Jahveh, thy redeemer,
And he that formed thee from the womb:
I am Jahveh, that maketh all things;
That stretcheth forth the heavens alone;
That spreadeth abroad the earth; who is with me?
That frustrateth the tokens of the liars,
And maketh diviners mad;
That turneth wise men backward,
And maketh their knowledge foolish:
That confirmeth the word of his servant,
And performeth the counsel of his messengers;

That saith of Jerusalem, She shall be inhabited;
And of the cities of Judah, They shall be built,
And I will raise up the waste places thereof:
That saith to the deep, Be dry,
And I will dry up thy rivers:
That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd,
And shall perform all my pleasure:
Even saying of Jerusalem, She shall be built;
And to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.
Thus saith Jahveh to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden,
To subdue nations before him,
And I will loose the loins of kings;
To open the doors before him,
And the gates shall not be shut;
I will go before thee,
And make the rugged places plain:
I will break in pieces the doors of brass,
And cut in sunder the bars of iron:
And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
And hidden riches of secret places,
That thou mayest know that I am Jahveh,
Which call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel.
For Jacob my servant's sake,
And Israel my chosen,
I have called thee by thy name:
I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known
me.
I am Jahveh, and there is none else;
Beside me there is no God:
I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me:
That they may know from the rising of the sun,
and from the west,
That there is none beside me:
I am Jahveh, and there is none else.
I form the light, and create darkness;
I make peace, and create evil;
I am Jahveh, that doeth all these things."

Cyrus, however, was no crusader, but a practical empire-builder. He had no quarrel with the gods of Babylon: in an inscription he attributes his victory to Marduk (whom he no doubt identified with Mithra) and records his clemency to the conquered and his restoration to their cities of the gods removed by Nabonidus. The history of the Jews at this time is extremely obscure. Except for a few short prophetic books and fragments, our only authority, after we take leave of the Books of Kings, consists of the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, a confused, repetitive, and contradictory compilation made late in the fourth or early in the third century B.C. and of value only where it quotes contemporary memoirs. That Cyrus gave permission for the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem and for the return of Jewish exiles to Palestine is likely enough, and accords with his general policy. But the decree inserted in Ezra i, 1-4, is a late invention. In any case the temple was not rebuilt under Cyrus. The contemporary prophet Haggai attributes this to the preoccupation of the Jews in building houses for themselves; the compiler of Ezra-Nehemiah attributes it to the hostility of the Samaritans (descendants of the Israelites of the northern kingdom and of colonists settled there by the Assyrian kings), who wished to help, but were rudely told by the Jews to mind their own business. Any statement about the Samaritans by a Jewish historian is to be accepted with reserve. The probabilities are that only a handful of enthusiasts availed themselves of the permission of Cyrus to return, and that when in Palestine they quarrelled with the natives and found themselves without the man-power or resources to carry out their design.

Cyrus was succeeded in 528 by his son Cambyses, who conquered Egypt, putting an end to the ancient kingdom of the Pharaohs (525). A generation had elapsed since Cyrus first launched the Persians on their career of conquest; and they had now become as corrupted by rapine and loot as any of their predecessors in empire. In the absence of Cambyses the throne was usurped by a Magian named Gaumata, who assumed the name of Smerdis, a murdered brother of that king, and was recognized by the whole Empire. Cambyses committed suicide (521). The usurper in his turn was assassinated by Darius, son of Hystaspes, a member of a younger branch of the royal family. By 519 Darius had successfully crushed pretenders in different parts of the Empire and established himself as undisputed king.

During these convulsions the Jews seem for a moment to have had hopes of recovering their independence. At the instigation of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah¹ the rebuilding of the temple was begun. Both prophets in effect foretell that in a little while the Persian Empire will be overthrown and Jerusalem become the religious capital of many nations, with Zerubbabel, a descendant of the Davidic dynasty, as its king. What lay behind these predictions and how far, if at all, the Jews were implicated in the insurrectionary movements of 522-519 we do not know. The recommendation to Zerubbabel in Zech. iv, 6 ("Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith Jahveh, God of hosts") suggests that they remained passive, expecting the Empire to collapse of

¹ Only chapters i-viii of Zechariah are genuine. The rest of the book is of much later date.

itself; but the language is designedly obscure. The success of Darius soon induced the Jews to abandon any visions of independence and to accept the new order. Darius met them in a generous spirit and sanctioned the completion of the temple, which was finished in 515. Jerusalem, however, seems to have remained unfortified.¹

For over half a century from the building of the second temple Jewish history is a complete blank. The small community at Jerusalem seems to have been hard put to it to preserve its existence. During the exile southern Judah had been occupied by the neighbouring Edomites. The short prophecy of Obadiah, Isa. lxiii, 1-6, and Mal. i, 2-5, seem to refer to a forgotten war in which the Jews gave the Edomites tit for tat. The struggle for bare life must have taken up most of the energy of the little colony of returned exiles. Yet enthusiasts did not abandon their vision of a new era. Under the shadow of Persia they no longer wrote under their own names: they circulated their writings either anonymously or under the name of some well-known prophet of the past. The later chapters of the Book of Isaiah (xlix-lxvi) consist of a string of these anonymous poems and prophecies. In the most striking of these the writer depicts the harried and despised Jew as the servant of Jahveh whose national calamities are to be the means of spreading true religion and justice among other nations (Isa. lii, 13-liii).

¹ The narrative in Ezra iv-vi is very confused. iv, 7-23, which records a prohibition to fortify Jerusalem, refers to the reign of Artaxerxes (465-425) and is out of place here.

“ He hath no form nor comeliness;
And when we see him, there is no beauty that we
should desire him.
He was despised, and rejected of men;
A man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness:
And as one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he hath borne our sicknesses,
And carried our sorrows:
Yet we did esteem him stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement of our peace was upon him;
And with his stripes we are healed . . .
He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be
satisfied:
By his knowledge shall my righteous servant make
many righteous:
And he shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great,
And he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
Because he poured out his soul unto death,
And was numbered with the transgressors:
Yet he bare the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.”

There has been much discussion as to whether the author of this poem had in mind any suffering individual apart from the suffering nation. In our complete ignorance of the history of the Jews at this period the question is unanswerable. The expectation of triumph at the close points to the personified nation. But much of the passage fits any martyr in any age, and its date is by no means certain. It was to play a notable part in helping to paint the picture of Christ in the minds of the first Christians.

While prophets stressed the international mission of Israel, a priestly writer or set of writers, probably living in Babylonia, were busy compiling laws for a model Jewish community. They prefaced the work with a new and expurgated account of Hebrew history from the creation to the time of Moses. The differences between this version (P) and the older versions already mentioned (J and E) are instructive. In the creation story of P the priestly narrator, as we have seen, uses a Babylonian myth. The six days' work of creation is followed by the institution of the sabbath (Gen. i-ii, 4a), the day of rest being thus made coeval with the world. Omitting the Eden story, P proceeds at once by his favourite device of a genealogy from Adam to Noah. The flood is related in some detail (vi, 9-viii—the repetitions are due to the compiler having interwoven P with J). The cessation of the flood is followed by the institution of *kosher* diet (ix, 1-17). A genealogy of the descendants of Noah leads swiftly to Abraham. P omits the wealth of folk-lore which surrounds the patriarchs in J and E, and concentrates on the institution of circumcision (xvii)¹ and on the genealogies of the descendants of Ishmael (xxv, 12-17), Esau (xxxvi) and Jacob (xlvi, 8-27). The main part of P, to which the foregoing sections are merely a preface, consists of the ritual and other legislation said to have been revealed by Jahveh to Moses (Exod. xxv-xxx and xxxiv, 29-xl, all Leviticus, and Num. i-x, 28, xvii-xix, xxvi-xxx and

¹ Circumcision was practised by the Egyptians, from whom, according to Herodotus, the Phoenicians and Jews learnt it. It was not practised by the Babylonians. P, writing in Babylonia and ignorant of the Egyptian custom, thinks it peculiar to the Hebrews.

xxxiii-xxxvi). In addition to a severe monotheism the characteristics of P are a monotonously formal style and a fondness for set phrases ("These are the generations," "after its kind," "be fruitful and multiply," "I establish my covenant," "after their families, after their tongues, in their lands, in their nations") and for exact dates, ages, and genealogies. The institution of the high priesthood in the person of Aaron is described with pomp and circumstance, and the priesthood limited to his descendants. The Levites, the hereditary priests of the old Jewish Kingdom, are degraded to the rank of mere servers and attendants; and that there may be no mistake about this, P inserts in Num. xvi a story in which a Levite called Korah is devoured by fire from Jahveh for daring to claim equality with Aaron.¹ In this and other features of their work the priestly writers were strongly influenced by Ezekiel; but whereas Ezekiel degrades the Levites as a punishment for their idolatry, P antedates their menial functions to the very beginning of Israelitish history.

The actual compilation of the Pentateuch (or rather Hexateuch, for the Book of Joshua was originally part of it) out of the documents JED and P was effected in the course of the fifth century. In preparing the "law of Moses" for promulgation it was found impossible to omit the popular, anthropomorphic stories of the older documents. The Jewish people demanded ancestors who had done and suffered,

¹ In the actual text the story of Korah has been interwoven with an older (J or E) account of a mutiny against Moses led by Dathan and Abiram, who are swallowed by an earthquake for their pains. The Korah story is contained in 1a, 2b-11, 16-24a, 35-end.

played a part in the world, and outdone their enemies in courage or cunning—not mere names in a genealogy or passive recipients of the divine commands. P provided the skeleton of the Pentateuch: J and E clothed it with flesh and blood. Hence the odd contradictions, repetitions, and general jostling of sources which characterize the narrative as it has come down to us.

During this obscure period of Jewish history momentous events were taking place in the world at large. The Greek cities of Asia Minor, which had surrendered to Cyrus, revolted against Darius. The aid given to them by Athens led the Persians to attempt the conquest of European Greece. The story needs no retelling. The defeats of Xerxes at Salamis (480) and Plataea (479) proved a turning-point in world-history. The Greeks, a race of mountaineers, seamen, and traders hitherto on the fringe of civilization, henceforth occupy the centre of the stage. The recovery of independence by the cities of Asia Minor (466), the revolt (albeit unsuccessful) of Egypt with Athenian help (460–454), and the rebellion of Megabyzus, satrap of Syria (448–447), were so many signs that Persian power was declining.

At this juncture it was highly important to Persia that Palestine should be in safe hands. This explains the decision of Artaxerxes I in 445 to secure the goodwill of the Jews by allowing them to fortify Jerusalem (a step till then prohibited) and to set up the theocratic community which they desired. The similarity between the Zoroastrian and Jewish religions made possible an understanding between Jews and Persians such as could never exist between Jews and poly-

theistic Egyptians or Greeks. Nehemiah, a Jew at the court at Artaxerxes, was commissioned at his own request to restore the fortifications of Jerusalem.

In our Bibles the mission of Ezra to Jerusalem is dated before that of Nehemiah. The order of events, however, has been disarranged. We know from Nehemiah that the high priest in his day was named Eliashib. According to Neh. xii, 22, Eliashib's successors were named Joiada, Johanan, and Jaddua—the last of whom was high priest in the time of Alexander. Now the priest in Ezra's time is Johanan, the son of Eliashib. It follows that Ezra was not before, but after Nehemiah. Each of them was commissioned by a Persian king named Artaxerxes—Nehemiah by Artaxerxes I (465–425), and Ezra by Artaxerxes II (404–359)—and the circumstance led the compiler to treat the two men as contemporaries. It would be natural for Persia to provide for the military security of Jerusalem first and for its religious needs later; and this was in fact done.

The memoirs of Nehemiah embodied in Neh. i.–ii, iv.–vi, and xiii, 4–end, though manipulated here and there by the compiler, are generally regarded as authentic and trustworthy. Other memoirs, whether of Ezra or Nehemiah, quoted in Ezra vii, 27–ix, and Neh. vii and xii, 27–xiii, 3, have been re-worked by the compiler with considerable freedom; and the whole compilation has been dislocated by copyists almost beyond belief. The facts which stand out from the documentary welter are that Nehemiah with Persian permission refortified Jerusalem, that Ezra introduced the Pentateuch and secured its acceptance as the law of the reconstituted Jewish community, and that the

establishment of Judaism in its historic shape as the religion of southern Palestine dates from that time.

The acceptance of the Pentateuch, including the Deuteronomic social code, as the law of the land marked in one sense the victory of the prophetic movement which had so largely inspired that code. But the victory was bought at a heavy price. The vested interests of the priesthood, which the earlier prophets had incessantly attacked, were perpetuated. The appeal of an ethical monotheism was narrowed by exclusive association with the cult of a particular temple. The fight of Nehemiah for social justice was stultified by the vendetta which he and Ezra waged against those Jews who had married foreign wives, and by the irreparable breach with Samaria which that vendetta occasioned. The Samaritans were of ancient Israelite stock, worshippers of Jahveh, and had offered to assist the Jews in rebuilding their temple. The discourteous refusal of their offer had estranged them; and the fortification of Jerusalem was carried out in the teeth of Samaritan opposition. In 432 Nehemiah banished from Jerusalem a grandson of the high priest who had married a daughter of the Samaritan Sanballat. This man migrated to Samaria, taking a copy of the Pentateuch with him. The Samaritans welcomed him, adopted the Pentateuch as their own, and built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim, rendering the schism final.¹

Gerizim was not the only rival to Jerusalem. In the time of Nebuchadnezzar a number of Jews had

¹ Josephus (first century A.D.) puts the schism a hundred years later. The banished priest, however, is clearly identical with the individual mentioned in Neh. xiii, 28. Josephus was interested in belittling the antiquity of the rival temple.

escaped from Palestine to Egypt. Papyri discovered in modern times show that they or their descendants were allowed to build a temple to Jahveh at Elephantine in Upper Egypt, and that even late in the fifth century the flourishing Jewish colony there did not recognize the Deuteronomic code and were in fact polytheists. These papyri are in the Aramaic language, and show that by that time Aramaic, the commercial and official language of the western provinces of the Persian Empire, was displacing Hebrew as the everyday speech of its Jewish subjects. Hebrew, however, remained the literary language of Palestine for centuries later.

The author of 2 Maccabees credits Nehemiah with the collection into a library of "the books about the kings and prophets, and the books of David, and letters of kings about sacred gifts." In view of the general untrustworthiness of 2 Maccabees this statement must be received with caution. It is possible, though not proved, that Nehemiah brought with him to Jerusalem the Books of Samuel and Kings (which, as we saw, were compiled in Babylonia a century before) and that he made a collection of those prophetic writings which had appeared up to his time. Those writings, however, had already been much interpolated; and interpolation did not cease with Nehemiah's edition.

Certain writings of this period repudiate openly or by implication the narrow conception of Judaism which Nehemiah and Ezra tried to impose. The anonymous author who goes by the name of Malachi ¹

¹ "Malachi" merely means "my messenger," and is borrowed from chapter iii, 1, by an editor who needed a title for the book.

drives home his denunciation of priestly abuses by comparing the temple cult of Jerusalem unfavourably with that of other nations who, he insists, actually worship the same God as the Jews and do it better (i, 11-14). The author of the Book of Jonah, writing a little later, uses a fictitious story of that prophet's mission to Nineveh to point the moral of the common humanity of Jew and Gentile. The Book of Ruth, probably about the same date, enforces a similar lesson by making David, the ideal king of a long lost past, the great-grandson of a foreign woman.

It is possible that the first collection of psalms, too, dates from this period, though the number of existing psalms which can be assigned to so early a date is very uncertain. The ascription of the Psalter to David, like the ascription of the Pentateuch to Moses, rests on late tradition only and is contradicted by the internal evidence of many psalms. None, in fact, can be proved even to be pre-exilic. Ps. xviii, a magnificent battle-song, and Ps. xx-xxi may date from the old Jewish kingdom, and certainly belong to the earliest collection. Ps. viii, xcvi, cv, cvi, and cxxxii may date from our period.¹ The completion of the Psalter, however, belongs to a much later time than that with which we are dealing.

With Nehemiah we reach the close of Old Testament history. For the next century we know little

¹ viii seems to be referred to in Job vii, 17. Parts of xcvi and cv and cvi are assigned to the time of David in 1 Chr. xvi. There is no other evidence for the ascription; and the close of cvi proves it to be post-exilic. The fact, however, that these psalms could plausibly be ascribed to David's time by the Chronicler (fourth or third century) indicates that they had then been long in use. So, too, with cxxxii, quoted in 2 Chron. vi, 41-42.

or nothing of the Jews. The decaying Persian Empire lingered on only through the inability of the Greek city-states to unite against it. Egypt recovered its independence in 404, and with the help of Greek mercenaries defied Persia successfully for sixty years. Artaxerxes III (359-338) succeeded in 343 after years of war, with the help of other Greek mercenaries, in reconquering Egypt. In this war the Jews are said to have suffered greatly, many of them being deported by Artaxerxes to Babylonia and Hyrcania on the Caspian Sea. This seems to be corroborated by the occurrence of the surname Hyrcanus in later Jewish history. There is unfortunately no evidence on which any reliance can be placed for Jewish history at this period. If there were, light might be thrown on many passages in the prophetic books, including the obscure book of Joel, which may date from this time.

Meanwhile the city-States of Greece were falling one by one under the power of Macedonia. In 338 the battle of Chaeronea made Philip master of Greece and leader of the Hellenes in the coming invasion of Asia, to which their master-spirits had long looked forward for the solution of their internal problems. His assassination in 336 gave only a momentary respite to the doomed Persian Empire. In 334 his son and successor, Alexander, led his Macedonians, augmented by the contingents of the Greek states, into Asia Minor. In 333 the battle of Issus on the border of Cilicia and Syria decided the fate of western Asia. In 332 Alexander destroyed Tyre and Gaza and sold their inhabitants into slavery; the Jews submitted without a blow; Egypt opened its arms to him as a

deliverer; and the foundations of Alexandria were laid. In 331 the last Persian army was destroyed at Gaugamela in Assyria, and the royal palace at Persepolis was looted and burnt. For the first time in history European conquerors, boasting of superior civilization and regarding Asiatics as their natural slaves, had the Oriental world at their feet.

CHAPTER IV

JEWES AND GREEKS

THE Greek claim to be superior to the Asiatics in civilization was in many respects justified. The Greeks had lived for centuries on the fringe of the great Oriental empires without being absorbed by them. Coming in contact with Oriental civilization as mercenaries and traders, they had acquired the rudiments of science from Babylonia and Egypt while remaining entirely detached from the priestly traditions of those countries, and so learnt to criticize the magical and mythical outlook on the world which underlay their own as well as other early religions. The habit of criticism, once begun, did not stop at religion, but extended itself to everything in heaven and earth, until in science, philosophy, art, literature, and political and social speculation the Greeks became the undisputed leaders of the ancient world.

It is instructive to compare and contrast the religion of the Greek philosophers and later poets with that of the Jewish prophets. Both alike attack the time-honoured ideas of their day. Xenophanes of Elea in the sixth century B.C. denounces the polytheism of Homer and Hesiod as scornfully as his contemporary, the unknown author of Isa. xl-xlviii, denounces that of Babylonia. To Xenophanes there is "one God, greatest among gods and men, neither in shape nor in thought like unto mortals," who "without toil ruleth all things by the thought of his mind," just as to the

unknown prophet Jahveh is the creator of heaven and earth, light and darkness, good and evil. Æschylus in the *Agamemnon* proclaims the doctrine of divine justice in language unsurpassed in any of the Psalms. Euripides in play after play uses the ancient legends as instruments for the exposure of the seamy side of traditional beliefs. Plato in the *Republic* echoes Xenophanes in his onslaught on the immorality of the old myths. But there is this difference between Greek and Jewish criticism of ancient religion. Greek philosophers, down to the fourth century at least, were a leisured class living on slave labour, educated by discussion and travel, and priding themselves on being freemen and gentlemen. They were little interested in social justice, and had an aristocratic tolerance of the priestcraft which they despised. Their criticism of ancient myths might lead, as in the case of Xenophanes and Plato, to an ethical monotheism, or as in the case of Thales and Democritus, to a scientific materialism; but in neither case had they any notion of propagating their views among the masses: the old gods were good enough for the mob. The Hebrew prophets, on the other hand, represented the class who had to carry priests and kings on their backs, whose faces were ground by land-grabbers and usurers, and who invariably got the worst of it in the clash of power-politics. Hence the passion of the prophets for social justice, and hence too their religious intolerance. The serenity of the classics is that of mastery: the fierceness of the prophets is that of frustration. The God of Greek philosophy *may* take sides, but seldom does. The God of the Jews *must* take sides: he would not be God if he did not.

The first contact of the Jews with the Greeks was not calculated to impress them with the benefits of Greek culture. Alexander, after overthrowing the Persian Empire and pushing his conquests to the Punjab, died at Babylon in 323, leaving an infant heir. The Macedonian generals who ruled as satraps in the various provinces of the Empire immediately began to fight over the spoils. Palestine became a bone of contention between Ptolemy, who held Egypt, and Antigonos, who claimed the Asiatic provinces. Jerusalem changed hands five times in twenty years and suffered heavily. A large number of Jews were deported to Alexandria either in Alexander's lifetime or by Ptolemy after his death. Their descendants in due course became a flourishing colony. Meanwhile the family of Alexander had been extinguished by a series of murders; and in 306 Antigonos assumed the title of king. Ptolemy in Egypt, Seleucus in Babylonia, and other rival satraps promptly followed suit. In 301 Antigonos was defeated and killed, Seleucus annexed Syria, and Ptolemy finally occupied Palestine.

To this troubled period, perhaps, belongs the Book of Job, the greatest of all the Hebrew poems which have come down to us. Job was an ancient legendary figure: he is mentioned by Ezekiel as one of the proverbially just men of old. The Book of Job, however, is much later than the time of Ezekiel. It is the earliest specimen of what is called "wisdom" literature—that is, the reflections on life of Jewish writers who were partly, at least, under the influence of Greek thought. It is a drama or dialogue on the contradiction between the evil of the world and the benevolence of God. In the prologue, which is written in prose, an argument

arises between Jahveh and Satan, "the adversary," the angel whose business is to find fault with men. (Satan at this period is one of the attendant spirits of Jahveh, and not yet, like the Persian Angra Mainyu, a being opposed to God.) When Jahveh points to Job as an example of piety, Satan observes that Job's happiness gives him cause to be pious, and predicts that he will renounce God in adversity. Jahveh gives Satan leave to try the experiment. Job is accordingly ruined, his children killed and he himself smitten with a foul disease. His three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to visit him. At this point the poem begins. Job curses the day when he was born and cries for death. When his friends advise him to repent of his sins, he denies that he has committed any. What has he done to God, anyhow, that God should treat him like this?

"If I have sinned, what do I unto thee, O thou watcher of men?

Why hast thou set me as a mark for thee,
So that I am a burden to myself?"

Job observes that the wicked are not in fact punished to the exclusion of the good, but often prosper while the innocent suffer. His friends get excited and acrimonious. Job sticks to his point, and indicts the injustice of God.

"Man that is born of a woman

Is of a few days, and full of trouble.

He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down:

He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one,

And bringest me into judgment with thee? . . .

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it
will sprout again,
And that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
Though the root thereof wax old in the earth,
And the stock thereof die in the ground;
Yet through the scent of water it will bud,
And put forth boughs like a plant.
But man dieth, and wasteth away:
Yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?
The waters are gone from the sea,
And the river decayeth and drieth up;
So man lieth down and riseth not:
Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,
Nor be roused out of their sleep."

Yet he hopes that God will vindicate him before he dies.

"But I know that my vindicator liveth,
And that he shall stand up at the last upon the
dust:
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,
Yet from my flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for myself,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

Some have thought that this passage refers to the hope of a future life. The text is unfortunately rather corrupt. But it is clear from passages already quoted and many others in the book that Job has no such hope. He demands justice on this side of the grave, and ends on an indignant note of outraged innocence (xxxix). Chapters xxxii-xxxvii, which introduce a new disputant, Elihu, are an interpolation. In xxxviii-xli Jahveh answers Job out of a whirlwind; and a very poor answer it is. Instead of a moral vindication of his dealings with man, he propounds a series of irre-

levant riddles about the universe, culminating in a rhapsody on the habits of the brute creation. The magnificence of the poetry cannot blind us, and can hardly have blinded the author, to its inconsequence. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the reply of Jahveh to Job is deliberate burlesque, and that the Hebrew poet, like Euripides, introduces God at the end of the drama in order to discredit him. The work is rounded off by a conventionally happy ending, written like the prologue in prose. The Book of Job is the first fruits of the impact of Greek scepticism on Jewish orthodoxy. There are a few interpolations. The speeches of Elihu, already mentioned, are the chief. There is some dislocation in xxiv and xxvi-xxvii, where Job's arguments have been mixed up with those of his friends. Chapter xxviii, a poem in praise of wisdom, though very fine, breaks the context and seems to have been copied into the book from some other source.

The latest historical composition in the Old Testament, consisting of the Books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah, was probably compiled about 300 B.C. The author of these books, a priest of Jerusalem, used our existing Books of Samuel and Kings, but rewrote the story with the purpose of enhancing the place in Jewish history of the temple services, the institution of which is attributed by the Chronicler to David and Solomon. The tendency to twist facts to point a moral is even more marked in Chronicles than in Kings; and the historical value of the work is consequently very slight indeed. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah originally formed part of the work of the Chronicler, but were separated by some early editor.

The confusion in which these two books have come down to us was noted in the last chapter.

During the whole of the third century B.C. Palestine remained in the hands of the Ptolemies. The period is marked by the rise in importance of the Jewish colony at Alexandria, the translation of the Pentateuch and some other books of the Old Testament into Greek, and the increasing permeation of the upper strata of Jewish society by Greek ideas. Alexandria under the Ptolemies was the commercial metropolis of the Greek-speaking world and the most famous seat of learning in antiquity. It was the great port of re-embarkation for the products of Upper Egypt and India on their way to the West. There the Ptolemies had trade relations with the rising power of Rome—already mistress of Italy. Alexandria's chief rival was Antioch, a city founded by Seleucus in northern Syria, which commanded the trade of the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf. The Jews of Alexandria were descended partly from deportees, partly from families which had migrated from Palestine to better themselves, and occupied an intermediate position between the Greek conquerors and the native Egyptians. The Ptolemies, whose interest it was to divide and govern the subject population, favoured the Jews as against the Egyptians and allowed them considerable powers of self-government. The Alexandrian Jews prospered, adopted Greek, the language of the upper classes, and soon so far forgot Hebrew as to need a Greek translation of the Pentateuch. This was carried out under Ptolemy II (283–246) and, according to a questionable Jewish tradition, by his command. An absurd story, according to which the work was done by seventy-two inde-

pendent translators, all of whose versions agreed to the last letter, has earned it the title of the Septuagint (LXX). The prophetic and other books of the Old Testament were translated into Greek later, the versions differing widely in date and merit.

At some time prior to the Greek translation of the Pentateuch the Jewish priests, probably in order to prevent the use of the name of Jahveh for magical purposes, had forbidden its utterance except in the temple services. Copyists continued to transcribe the divine name where it occurred in the sacred books; but the reader was required at such places to substitute the word *Adonai* ("Lord") or *Elohim* ("God"). In all probability the practice was a consequence of the dispersion of the Jews in foreign countries, where the magical abuse of the name was not uncommon. The Samaritans, who entertained similar objections to its use, substituted a different word, *Eshma* ("the name"). The Septuagint consistently renders "Jahveh" by the Greek word *Kyrios* ("Lord"). One result of the taboo was that in later times the correct pronunciation of the unutterable name was completely lost, and has only been re-established by modern scholars after considerable research.¹

The third century saw two remarkable additions to Jewish "wisdom" literature. One, the Book of Proverbs, forms part of the Old Testament. Just as all Jewish law was ascribed to Moses and all Jewish

¹ Ancient Hebrew had no vowel signs. The letters of the name JHVH therefore afforded no guide to its pronunciation. Later, the vowel signs of *Adonai* were used, by which medieval scholars were led to adopt the erroneous rendering "Jehovah." Since the nineteenth century "Jahveh" has generally been accepted.

psalmody to David, so it became a convention to ascribe "wisdom" books, such as Proverbs, to Solomon. The book, however, is one of the latest in the Old Testament and shows the influence of Greek thought. In viii the author speaks in the name of a personified Wisdom, whom he represents as the partner of God in the creation of the world.

"When he established the heavens, I was there:
When he set a circle upon the face of the deep:
When he made firm the skies above:
When the fountains of the deep became strong:
When he gave to the sea its bound,
That the waters should not transgress his command-
ment:
When he marked out the foundations of the earth:
Then I was by him, a master workman:
And I was daily his delight,
Rejoicing always before him;
Rejoicing in his habitable earth,
And my delight was with the sons of men."

The exaltation of the creative function of wisdom is new in Jewish thought, but is on all fours with that of Plato, and suggests that the author of Proverbs is trying to read Greek philosophy into Gen. i. The book is not all of a piece: the central portion, x-xxix, consists of short aphorisms, no doubt of various dates and origins. It cannot be proved that none of these go back to Solomon; but there is no good reason to think that any do.

The other "wisdom" book of the third century is by an author who spoilt his chances of inclusion in the canon by writing under his own name. Jeshua (in Greek, Jesus) the son of Sira wrote at Jerusalem about 200 B.C. a book which was translated from Hebrew

into Greek by his grandson at Alexandria in the following century and which is included in our Apocrypha under the name of Ecclesiasticus ("the church book" or "book for reading in church"). Its original title seems to have been simply "Wisdom." Its exclusion from the Old Testament is due solely to a late Jewish fiction according to which the canon was closed by Ezra and Nehemiah. The Wisdom of Jeshua ben-Sira has many affinities with Proverbs, but is more individual and racy. Both books reflect the views of a prosperous and well-educated class. Both take slavery for granted. Ben-Sira has strong opinions on the treatment appropriate to slaves.

"Fodder, a stick, and burdens, for an ass;
Bread, and discipline, and work, for a servant.
Set thy servant to work, and thou shalt find rest:
Leave his hands idle, and he will seek liberty.
Yoke and thong will bow the neck:
And for an evil servant there are racks and tortures.
Send him to labour, that he be not idle;
For idleness teacheth much mischief.
Set him to work, as is fit for him;
And if he obey not, make his fetters heavy."

We have evidently travelled far from the days of Deuteronomy and its prohibition of the return of run-aways. Indeed, such sentiments as those of Ben-Sira give cause to wonder how far the Deuteronomic code on this subject was ever more than eyewash. Yet even his severity was tempered by enlightened self-interest.

"If thou hast a servant, treat him as thyself;
For as thine own soul wilt thou have need of him:
If thou treat him ill, and he depart and run away,
Which way wilt thou go to seek him?"

Ben-Sira manages to blend traditional piety with a good deal of Greek culture, and looks down on those who have to work for their living and lack time for self-improvement.

“The wisdom of the scribe cometh by opportunity of leisure;

And he that hath little business shall become wise.
How shall he become wise that holdeth the plough,
That glorieth in the shaft of the goad,
That driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours,
And whose discourse is of the stock of bulls?
He will set his heart upon turning his furrows;
And his wakefulness is to give his heifers their fodder.

. . . Not so he that hath applied his soul,
And meditateth in the law of the Most High;
He will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients,
And will be occupied in prophecies.
He will keep the discourse of the men of renown,
And will enter in amidst the subtleties of parables.
He will seek out the hidden meaning of proverbs,
And be conversant in the dark sayings of parables.
He will serve among great men,
And appear before him that ruleth:
He will travel through the land of strange nations;
For he hath tried good things and evil among men.
He will apply his heart to resort early to the Lord
that made him,
And will make supplication before the Most High,
And will open his mouth in prayer,
And will make supplication for his sins. . . .
Many shall commend his understanding;
And so long as the world endureth, it shall not be
blotted out:
His memorial shall not depart,
And his name shall live from generation to generation.

Nations shall declare his wisdom,
And the congregation shall tell out his praise."

This theme is developed in the great eulogy of famous men with which the book concludes.

To the third century also belongs in all probability the one and only extant specimen of Hebrew love poetry, the Song of Songs. This is an anthology of lyrics sung at wedding festivities. Syrian weddings even in modern times usually take place in the spring and in the open air. The bridegroom and bride play the parts of a king and queen, and receive the homage of the villagers, who celebrate with songs the beauty of the wedded pair. Similar ceremonies appear to have attended weddings in ancient Palestine. Hence the references to "king Solomon" and the "prince's daughter," which led to the erroneous ascription of the Song to that polygamous monarch. Hence too the florid eulogies of male and female beauty which occur in the anthology. The book owes its place in the canon, and indeed its preservation, to the fortunate pedantry of Jewish rabbis of the second century A.D., who, unable to suppress the Song of Songs, interpreted its luscious imagery as an allegory of the love of God for Israel. The Christian Fathers followed suit, transferring the allegory to the love of Christ for the Church. It is strange that we should be indebted to these dullards for the preservation of such lines as these.

"My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For lo, the winter is past,
The rain is over and gone;
The flowers appear on the earth;

The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in our land;
The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

The peaceful rule of the Ptolemies, under which sages could meditate on wisdom and poets sing the praise of beauty, was drawing to an end. During the third century the Ptolemies were involved in repeated wars with the Seleucid Empire, heir of the Asiatic conquests of Alexander, which had its capital at Antioch. In 204 Antiochus III, the reigning Seleucid, taking advantage of the infancy of the reigning Ptolemy, entered into an alliance with Philip V of Macedon to partition the Ptolemaic Empire. Once more Palestine became a battleground of rival dynasties. During the war a party among the Jews—probably the poorer classes, who had little to lose and had not forgotten the dreams of the prophets—made a bid for independence, but were crushed by the troops of Ptolemy. In 198 Palestine finally fell to Antiochus. The further plans of Antiochus and Philip were thwarted by the intervention of Rome. The plutocratic republic of the West was an old ally and customer of the Ptolemies, and had just been assisted by imports of Egyptian corn to emerge victorious from the death-struggle with her rival Carthage. Dominant now in Italy, Sicily, and Spain, Rome for the first time took a hand in the East. In 198 her legions drove Philip out of Greece, and in 190 drove Antiochus out of Asia Minor, making Rome in a few years the pre-dominant power in the Mediterranean.

For the present the badly shaken Seleucid Empire continued to hold Palestine. In order to pay the heavy indemnity imposed by Rome, Antiochus resolved to confiscate temple funds in different parts of his dominions. In the ancient world temples, among other uses, supplied the place of banks; and the policy provoked violent resistance among the Asiatics. In 187 Antiochus was killed in an attempt to loot a rich temple in Iran. His son, Seleucus IV, turned his attention to Jerusalem. According to a Jewish legend preserved in 2 Maccabees, Heliodorus, the minister of Seleucus, while trying to raid the temple treasury, was scourged out of the sanctuary by angels and narrowly escaped with his life. Such legends are usually of the nature of wish-fulfilling dreams: probably the temple was in fact plundered.

From this time onward the hatred of the Jewish people for their Greek rulers rapidly rose to white heat. Many Jews looked back with regret to what now seemed the halcyon days of the Persian Empire. The Persian kings might have sometimes oppressed the Jews, but they had often favoured and trusted them. They had restored their city and temple. What had these Greeks done but insult and plunder both? Such a mood as this finds expression in the Book of Esther. The author lays the scene of his romance at the court of Xerxes¹—the same Xerxes who had come within an ace of conquering Greece. Haman, the minister of Xerxes, designs to massacre all the Jews in the Persian Empire in one day in revenge

¹ "Ahasuerus" in our Bible is merely a Latin transliteration of "Ahashverosh," the Hebrew way of writing the Persian "Khshayarsha," of which "Xerxes" is the Greek form.

for an insult offered him by Mordecai, one of their number. Esther, the cousin of Mordecai and consort of Xerxes, defeats the plot. Haman is hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai; and the Jews are allowed by Xerxes to massacre their enemies on the day which had been fixed for their own destruction. The story unfolds itself in an Arabian Nights atmosphere and teems with extravagances and impossibilities. These imaginary events are connected by the author with the Jewish feast of Purim, a new year festival probably of Babylonian origin. It is significant that the names of Mordecai and Esther are only slight variants of those of the Babylonian deities Marduk and Ishtar, while the name of Haman suggests Hamman, the chief deity of the Elamites, who were ancient enemies of Babylon. Clearly the festival and its patrons were far older than the crude story which the author of Esther chose to weave round their names.¹

But the Persian Empire was dead. The Seleucid Empire, though shaken by defeat, lived on. A deepening cleavage developed between the rich, Hellenized Jews, who favoured collaboration with the Seleucids, and the mass of the nation, who hated them as oppressors. The Jewish ruling class, the great priestly families and nobles of Jerusalem, were on easy terms with the dominant power, spoke Greek and adopted Greek names: Jeshua was changed into Jason, Eliakim into Alcimus, Menahem into Menelaus. Men of this class viewed the "law of Moses" as an

¹ In the Greek translation of the book Haman is called a Macedonian, and the story is thus given an overtly anti-Greek twist.

amusing fraud very profitable to themselves. The mass of peasants, artisans, and petty traders, on the other hand, regarded the Pentateuchal code as their charter, their religion, their all, and demanded the fulfilment of those parts of it which the priests and aristocracy ignored. They found a rallying-point in the synagogues—meeting-places for prayer and instruction—which had gradually grown up in all Jewish communities remote from Jerusalem. In contrast to the temple, the synagogue was a democratic institution, controlled not by the priests, but by the elders of the local community. Any Jew could conduct the service. The law was read aloud and translated from literary Hebrew into popular Aramaic, prayers were offered, sermons preached, children taught, collections taken for the poorer members, disputes settled and ideas exchanged. The synagogue was the means by which the Jewish masses became saturated not only with the myth and ritual of the Pentateuch, but with an intense national pride, a real sense of social justice, and a bitter hatred of the oppressor and exploiter. Those numerous Psalms in which the poet identifies himself with the poor and needy and his enemies with the rich and powerful (e.g., xii, xiv, xvii, and xxxvii) were probably written originally not for the formal service of the temple, but for the popular worship of the synagogue.

“ Help, Jahveh; for the godly man ceaseth;
For the faithful fail from among the children of
men.
They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
With flattering lip, and with a double heart, do they
speak.

Jahveh shall cut off all flattering lips,
The tongue that speaketh great things:
Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail;
Our lips are our own: who is lord over us?
For the spoiling of the poor, for the sighing of the
needy,

Now will I arise, saith Jahveh;
I will set him in safety at whom they puff.
The words of Jahveh are pure words;
As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,
Purified seven times.

Thou shalt keep them, O Jahveh,
Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for
ever.

The wicked walk on every side,
When vileness is exalted among the sons of men."

CHAPTER V

THE MACCABEAN REVOLUTION

WITH the accession of Antiochus IV to the throne of the Seleucids in 175 the relations of the Empire with its Jewish subjects came rapidly to a head. The Hellenizing party at Jerusalem got possession of the high priesthood and introduced Greek fashions and amenities as fast as they were able. From their point of view they were engaged in a civilizing mission; and had the Seleucid Empire been in a stronger position they might, notwithstanding the opposition of pious Jews, have succeeded in their policy. But in 170 Antiochus became involved in war with Ptolemy VI and invaded Egypt. As usual, Jewish patriots saw in the difficulty of their rulers their own opportunity. The more cautious looked to Egypt for deliverance from the Seleucids; the bolder revolutionaries hoped to assert their independence of both empires, and were prepared to make common cause with Samaria to that end. During the absence of Antiochus in Egypt a faction fight between two claimants to the high priesthood developed into a serious popular rising.¹

¹ The course of events at this point is obscure owing to the contradictory nature of our authorities. These are, in order of age, (1) 1 Maccabees (about 100 B.C.)—a good history, but fully informative only from 168 B.C.; (2) 2 Maccabees (last century B.C.)—fuller, but most untrustworthy and too full of miracles and martyrdoms; (3) Josephus (first century A.D.)—useful as a check on 2 Maccabees, with which he is frequently at variance. The "prophecies" in Dan. xi, 21-45, and Zech. ix-xiv are contemporary with the events and to some extent a useful commentary on them.

The high hopes of the revolutionary party at this time seem to be reflected in an anonymous prophecy which has been copied into the book of Zechariah (ix-xi, 3). The author predicts deliverance from Greek domination and the reunion of Judah and Samaria (Ephraim) under an ideal king of the pattern prescribed in Deut. xvii, 14-20, who will establish a golden age of peace.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold, thy king cometh unto thee:
He is just, and having salvation;
Lowly, and riding upon an ass,
Even upon a colt, the foal of an ass.
And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,
And the horse from Jerusalem,
And the battle bow shall be cut off;
And he shall speak peace unto the nations:
And his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
And from the river to the ends of the earth. . . .
For I have bent Judah for me,
I have filled the bow with Ephraim;
And I will stir up thy sons, O Zion,
Against thy sons, O Greece,
And will make thee as the sword of a mighty
man.”

Antiochus was obliged to abandon the siege of Alexandria in order to crush the Jews. Jerusalem was taken and sacked, the temple pillaged, and Greek governors appointed in Jerusalem and Samaria. In 168 Antiochus returned to deal with Egypt, but was compelled by an ultimatum from Rome to evacuate that country. Forced to confine his attention to Asia, Antiochus resolved to settle the Jewish question

once and for all. Recent events had convinced him that the Jewish religion was a mere mask for sedition. He therefore threw a strong garrison into Jerusalem, erected an altar to Olympian Zeus in the temple, prohibited circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath, and ordered the destruction of all copies of the Pentateuch. Jahveh, he probably reasoned, was only their barbarous name for Zeus: let the Jews recognize that fact and show their loyalty to the Empire by joining in a common worship. On the same principle the Samaritan temple on Gerizim was rededicated to Zeus Xenios ("protector of strangers").¹

The priestly aristocracy conformed. So long as their incomes were safe, it mattered nothing to them whether their god were called by one name or another. Not so the poorer classes of Jews, to whom Greek culture meant nothing and who had learnt in the synagogue that Jahveh was the God of the whole earth and the Pentateuch his promise of deliverance from bondage. Many, led by an outlawed priest named Onias, escaped to Egypt, where Ptolemy VI, the enemy of Antiochus, allowed them to build a temple at Leontopolis in the Delta. Those who could not escape defied Antiochus to the death, or took to the hills with Judas Maccabaeus (*Makkabi*, "the hammer") and raised the standard of revolution. A number of psalms (certainly xliv, lxxiv, lxxix, and lxxx)

¹ Chilperic Edwards (*The Messianic Idea*) rejects the story of the persecution as inconsistent with Greek toleration. But he entirely overlooks the political and revolutionary side of Judaism which alone makes the story intelligible. The Seleucids had exactly the same grounds for proceeding against Judaism as the Roman Emperors later had against Christianity, or modern Capitalist States against Communism.

date from this time and reflect the mood of these *Hasidim* ("saints" or "pious ones").

"O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance;
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to
be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
Their blood have they shed like water round about
Jerusalem;
And there was none to bury them.
We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about
us.
How long, O Jahveh, wilt thou be angry for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?
Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that know
thee not,
And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy
name" (lxxix).

"Turn us again, O God of hosts;
And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.
Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt:
Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.
Thou preparedst room before it,
And it took deep root, and filled the land.
The mountains were covered with the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.
She sent out her branches unto the sea,
And her roots unto the river.
Why hast thou broken down her fences,
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
The boar out of the wood doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it. . . .
Turn us again, O Jahveh, God of hosts;
Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved"
(lxxx).

A pretty accurate, though naturally biased account of the successful revolt against the Seleucids is given in the first of the two Books of the Maccabees in our Apocrypha. Had Antiochus been able to bring his whole force to bear on the revolutionaries, the issue might have been different. But the Seleucid Empire was disintegrating. The Parthians, a hitherto obscure people on the Caspian Sea, emerging from their fastnesses like the Medes and Persians in former times, had made themselves masters of a great part of Iran and threatened the Seleucids from the east. While Antiochus was engaged with them, Judas Maccabaeus defeated the imperial forces sent against him, and in 165 entered Jerusalem and rededicated the temple to Jahveh. Ps. xxiv, lxviii, cxiii-cxviii, and cxlix were in all probability written to commemorate this occasion. xxiv acclaims the triumphal return of Jahveh to his sanctuary.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors:
And the king of glory shall come in.
Who is the king of glory?
Jahveh, strong and mighty,
Jahveh, mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors:
And the king of glory shall come in.
Who is this king of glory?
Jahveh, God of hosts,
He is the king of glory.”

lxviii is a magnificent processional hymn, written late in Jewish history, but going back for its imagery to the ancient Song of Deborah (7-8). It celebrates the rout of the Seleucid armies:—

“The Lord giveth the word:
The women that publish the tidings are a great
host.
Kings of armies flee, they flee:
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.”

It describes the procession into the temple:—

“They have seen thy goings, O God,
Even the goings of my God, my king, into the
sanctuary.
The singers went before, the minstrels followed
after,
In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.”

It anticipates the day when kings will do homage
there:—

“Because of thy temple at Jerusalem
Kings shall bring presents unto thee . . .
Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto
God.”

Ps. cxiii–cxviii (called the *Hallel*, or “song of
praise” *par excellence*) were regularly sung at the
annual festival which commemorated the re-dedica-
tion of the temple, and may very well have been com-
posed for the occasion. cxlix is a victory-song of the
Hasidim (called “saints” in our translation).

“The high praises of God in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand;
To execute vengeance upon the nations,
And punishments upon the peoples;
To bind their kings in chains,
And their nobles in fetters of iron;

To execute upon them the judgment written:
This honour have all his saints." ¹

The most remarkable literary product of the Maccabean revolution is the Book of Daniel. This book is one of the earliest specimens of a new brand of propagandist writing which was to play a memorable part in late Jewish and early Christian history. We noted before the tendency of prophetic writers under the Persian and Greek Empires to circulate their works either anonymously or in the name of some distinguished prophet of the past. This was, no doubt, originally a precaution intended to screen subversive writers from the attentions of the Government. Experience showed, however, that the name of an ancient prophet added immensely to the popularity and prestige of such writings; and as time went on anonymous prophecy fell gradually into disuse and pseudonymous prophecy became the rule. To accredit such prophecies, it became necessary to attribute to the ancient prophet a minute acquaintance with the politics of the age in which the real author lived. These were accordingly supposed to have been communicated to him in a series of divine or angelic revelations. From the use of such machinery a book of this kind is commonly known as an "apocalypse" (revelation).

Who Daniel really was, and indeed whether he ever lived, we have no means of knowing. The name,

¹ It is no accident that these Maccabean psalms were favourites with the English revolutionaries of the seventeenth century. The historical situations were analogous: a hated king and nobility, a mass movement clothing its ideology in religious symbols, and a revolutionary crisis.

like that of Job, occurs in Ezekiel as that of a worthy of bygone days. Clearly, therefore, Daniel cannot have lived at Babylon during the exile, for then he would have been the contemporary and indeed the junior of Ezekiel. The location of Daniel at the court of Nebuchadnezzar is only one example, as we shall see, of our author's free treatment of history.

The book is, in fact, a revolutionary pamphlet intended to encourage the *Hasidim* in their resistance to Antiochus by predicting the imminent advent of a new world order. This is announced in symbolic language in chapter ii, in which Daniel, the skilled interpreter of dreams, interprets a dream of Nebuchadnezzar. To impress the reader with Daniel's prophetic powers, he is made first to relate the dream, which the king has forgotten, and then to give the interpretation. In the dream an image made of different materials symbolizes a succession of empires—the golden head, Nebuchadnezzar's own empire of Babylon; the silver breast and arms, the Median Empire, which the author erroneously supposes to have succeeded the Babylonian; the belly and thighs of brass, Persia; the legs of iron, Macedonia; the feet of iron and clay, the divided empire of Alexander's successors. A stone "cut out without hands," which dashes the image in pieces, symbolizes the kingdom of God, which will break these empires in pieces and stand for ever.

Chapter iii, which relates the condemnation of Daniel's three friends and their miraculous deliverance from the "burning fiery furnace," has no relevance to Nebuchadnezzar, who did not persecute Judaism, but much relevance to Antiochus, who did. Chapter v gives an entirely unhistorical account of the overthrow

of "Belshazzar the king," represented as the son of Nebuchadnezzar, by the Medes and Persians. The only Belshazzar known to history was not a king and was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar, but of the usurper Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, whose army he commanded in the field. "Darius the Mede," represented by our author as the successor of Belshazzar, is a pure figment: Nabonidus was immediately succeeded by his conqueror, Cyrus.

Chapters vii-xii supplement and expand the dream interpreted in ii. The succession of empires from the supposed time of Daniel down to the author's own day is recounted, in the guise of prophecy, three times over. The first vision (vii) represents each empire by an imaginary monster. The fourth monster (the Macedonian Empire) has ten horns (the various successors of Alexander). A "little horn" (Antiochus IV) persecutes "the saints of the Most High" for "a time and times and half a time"—a dark allusion to the three years and a half (168-165), during which Antiochus tried to suppress Judaism. Then God intervenes, the monster is destroyed, and the "saints" rule the world. In the second vision (viii) the theme is repeated with variations, and the persecuting power, hitherto indicated only in symbol, is for the first time named: the angel Gabriel tells Daniel that the Greek Empire is meant. In ix Gabriel announces that "seventy weeks" (i.e., seventy times seven years)¹ will elapse from the end of the Babylonian exile to the final triumph of Israel. In the last of these "weeks" of seven years the legitimate suc-

¹ The Hebrew *shabua*, translated "week," merely means a set of seven. It is just as applicable to years as to days.

cession of high priests will be broken ("the anointed one shall be cut off, and shall have nothing"). Half-way through this "week" Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed by Antiochus ("the prince that shall come") and remain desolate until "the consummation." (The author's chronology is at fault: the time from the end of the Babylonian exile to his own day was not 490 years, but 375.) Finally, in the third vision (x-xii) allegory is dropped and the prophecy is repeated in plain language, but without naming individuals. The wars between Persia and Greece, the conquests of Alexander, the division of his empire, the treaties and wars between Ptolemies and Seleucids (kings of the "south" and "north"), and the career of Antiochus IV ("a contemptible person") are narrated at some length. "The abomination that maketh desolate" in xi, 31, is a pun, intelligible only in Hebrew, on the name of Olympian Zeus, to whom Antiochus erected an altar in the temple at Jerusalem. At the end of the three years and a half of tribulation "Michael, the great prince"—the celestial patron of Israel—will arise and deliver the Jews. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." xii, 11-12, in which the original three years and a half are amended first to 1290 and then to 1335 days, look like interpolations.

The differences between Daniel and the older prophetic writings are obvious. In addition to its apocalyptic machinery, the book is remarkable for its

belief in a hierarchy of angels and a resurrection. Both beliefs are of Zoroastrian origin. Common subjection to the Seleucid Empire, and resentment of its attacks on their temples and other high-handed measures, no doubt promoted among Asiatic peoples a certain sense of common interest and a certain exchange of ideas. The spread of Greek philosophy among the Jewish upper classes had its counterpart in the spread of Persian folk-lore among the masses. Under Persian influence those messengers or "angels" of Jahveh, whose existence in a general way the Jews had always recognized, were given ranks, functions, individualities, and names. Under the same influence Satan, the "adversary" or fault-finder, who in the Book of Job is merely an attendant of Jahveh, took on the sinister attributes of Angra Mainyu and acquired his retinue of demons or devils. Persian influence too, aided by wishful thinking and the stress of the Maccabean crisis, led to the belief that those Jews who died in the struggle would be rewarded and those who sold out to the enemy punished in another life. The Zoroastrian doctrine of a general resurrection of the dead did not find its way into Judaism till later. Daniel says that "many" will rise, not that all will.

These beliefs were not introduced into Judaism by the author of Daniel. They were in the air. The apocryphal Book of Enoch consists of a series of pseudonymous prophecies circulated at different dates in the last two centuries B.C. under the names of the patriarchs Enoch, Methuselah, and Noah. The Hebrew or Aramaic original of these is lost, and they are known to us only in a few Greek fragments and in an Ethiopic text of the whole book translated from the

Greek. The oldest of these prophecies was written a little before the Book of Daniel and, like Daniel, predicts the advent of a kingdom of God with Jerusalem as its centre and a general resurrection and judgment of Israel, but not of the rest of mankind. Good Jews will share the fun of God's kingdom on earth, eating, drinking, and begetting children; apostates will be cast into Gehenna (originally *Ge Hinnom*, the place outside Jerusalem where refuse was dumped and the bodies of criminals were thrown). The risen "saints" will not live for ever: after enjoying patriarchal lives and begetting a thousand children each, they will finally die. The author of Daniel, who wrote a little later, improves on this, as we saw, by promising them everlasting life. This proved the more popular view. The second oldest of the Enoch prophecies, written about the same time as Daniel, removes the time-limit.

Antiochus IV died in 164. The war between the Seleucids and the Jewish revolutionaries continued. In 161 Judas Maccabaeus strengthened his position by an alliance with the Romans, who were willing enough to undermine the Seleucid Empire by encouraging its rebellious subjects. Soon afterwards he fell in battle. His brother, Jonathan, played an adroit game of power-politics with two rival claimants to the Seleucid throne, Demetrius I and the pretender Alexander Balas. In 153 Jonathan was recognized by Alexander as high priest of Jerusalem. In 143 Simon, brother and successor of Jonathan, was granted by Demetrius II exemption from tribute and became virtually the independent ruler of Judaea. These successes were due to the diplomatic support of Rome

and to the weakening of the Seleucid Empire by the Parthians, who gradually became masters of all the provinces east of the Euphrates.

In every time of crisis there are those who, disillusioned and weary, withdraw themselves from the battle. Such a man was the author of the book known as *Ecclesiastes* (Hebrew *Koheleth*, the "preacher" or "orator"). The date of this work is not precisely known, but its style proves it to be almost, if not quite the latest in the Old Testament, and such vague allusions as it contains fit the Maccabean period.¹ The author is a Jew of the upper class, Greek in his attitude to life and completely detached from the aspirations and struggles of his nation. Nothing is worth striving for. "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. . . . There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. . . . For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." He recognizes the injustice in the world: it is better to be dead than alive, and better

¹ The "old and foolish king" who "out of prison came forth to be king" (iv, 13-14) may be Antiochus IV (175-164) or Demetrius I (162-150). Both had been hostages at Rome before their accession. The "poor and wise youth" may be Alexander Balas (150-145), the usurper who overthrew Demetrius and from whom Jonathan the Hasmonæan received the high priesthood of Jerusalem.

still not to be born. "Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself over wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" It is all the fault of civilization: "God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Revolution mends nothing: "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. . . . Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." Let a man make the most of life before he gets old and goes to his long home. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity."

This, the most rational, most irreligious, and most cynical book in the Old Testament, was not allowed to stand as it was. Later scribes felt obliged to insert sentiments which, however pious in intention, are nonsense in their context. Thus in ii, 26, the statement of God's justice interrupts the sense and is plainly an interpolation. Similar insertions occur in vii, 18b; viii, 12-13; ix, 1b; xi, 9b; and xi, 10b-xii, 1a. xii, 9-14 is a series of notes added by different editors, 9-11 endorsing the book, 13-14 supplying an orthodox conclusion. These interpolations and the ascription of the book to Solomon induced the rabbis of a later generation, after much debate, to admit it to the canon.

The opinions of Ecclesiastes are those of the more cultured section of the Jewish aristocracy. The book is, in fact, an unusually frank rationalization of their class privileges. Open Hellenizers they could hardly

be: the Maccabean revolution had forced them to conform outwardly to Judaism. But they held to it loosely, treating it as the established cult of their country, but not as an article of export, still less as an instrument of social justice. Those who shared this outlook became known as Sadducees—a name of uncertain origin, perhaps connected with the Zadokites, the old high priestly family of Jerusalem.¹

Opposed to the Sadducees were the *Hasidim*, the revolutionary party whose rallying-point was the synagogue, who had organized resistance to the Seleucids, and with whose help the Hasmonæans (Judas Maccabæus and his family) had climbed to power. The members of this party were dedicated men of ascetic life, who for that reason became known as Pharisees (Hebrew *Perushim*, "men set apart"). We must not judge the Pharisees of the second century B.C. by the invectives levelled at the party in the Gospels, which originated two hundred years later. The Pharisees were devotees of the Pentateuchal law, in which they saw a complete manual of individual and social righteousness; but they were also deeply imbued with the teaching of the prophets on the international mission of the Jews, and with the apocalyptic dreams of Daniel and Enoch on the coming new world order and the resurrection. For the present they pinned their hopes to the Hasmonæans as the leaders through whom the kingdom of God was to be realized. The ascendancy of the

¹ Others derive the name "Sadducee" from *Zindik*, a Persian word denoting a Zoroastrian. But the Sadducees were not Zoroastrians, and in fact owed far less to Zoroastrian ideas than did the Pharisees and Essenes. A more unconvincing derivation can hardly be imagined.

Pharisees in the synagogue made them all-powerful with the masses.

A small minority of the *Hasidim*, known to history as the Essenes (probably a variant of the same word), tried to realize their Utopia by isolating themselves from the world in a religious order. The Essenes in fact were an extreme wing of the Pharisees. They lived an ascetic life, observed a scrupulous ceremonial, practised community of goods, and renounced slavery, oaths, and animal sacrifice. Some also renounced marriage. They reconciled their position with the teaching of the Pentateuch by allegorical interpretation. Their isolation greatly limited their influence, and in spite of their reputation for sanctity their numbers by the first century A.D. were no more than four thousand.

The Hasmonæans owed their position as heads of the State to their successful leadership of the revolt against the Seleucids. They soon proved that they cared more for power-politics and grab than for the kingdom of God on earth. But for the present their successes were so recent and dazzling as to silence all opposition. Psalms ii and cx, probably written in honour of Simon the Hasmonæan, show the prestige enjoyed by, and the adulation lavished on the new priestly dynasty.

“Jahveh saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand,

Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

Jahveh shall send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion:

Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies . . .

Jahveh hath sworn, and will not repent,

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek." ¹

The completion and final arrangement of the Psalter date from this time. Till then different collections of Psalms, each probably compiled over a long period of time, had been in use in the temple at Jerusalem and in synagogues in other parts of Palestine. The five books (i-xli, xlii-lxxii, lxxiii-lxxxix, xc-cvi, and cvii-cl) into which the Psalter is divided correspond roughly, but not exactly, with the separate collections from which it was formed. Some psalms or parts of psalms appear in more than one collection: e.g., xiv is repeated with certain alterations in liii; xl, 13-17, in lxx; and lvii, 7-11, and lx, 5-12, are amalgamated to make cviii. Each collection has its special characteristics. iii-xli habitually represent the psalmist or his congregation as poor and oppressed (ix, x, xii, xiii, xiv, xvii, xxv, etc.)—a trait which suggests that these psalms were written for the synagogue rather than the temple. xlii-lxxxiii also seem to be mainly psalms of the synagogue. This second collection passed through the hands of an editor or editors who nearly everywhere altered the name "Jahveh" to "God" (*Elohim*). lxxxiv-lxxxix do not do this and must have belonged to another collection. xc-cl, on the other hand, are manifestly psalms of the temple. They are mostly songs of praise, and include the great Maccabean victory-chants, cxiii-cxviii and cxlix. About 140 B.C. the different collections were combined

¹ The legendary "king of Salem" and "priest of God most high" in Gen. xiv. The Hasmonæans, having no legitimate title to the high priesthood, affected to be successors of Melchizedek, the ancient priest-king of Jerusalem, and therefore of more venerable title than the Zadokite priesthood.

in one book. Two psalms—i in praise of the law, and ii in compliment to the reigning high priest Simon—were prefixed to the book as an introduction; and cxlvi-cl were placed at the end as a grand finale. The titles ascribing different psalms to David, Solomon, Moses, or one or another of David's choirmasters (Asaph, Heman, Ethan, etc.) are of no authority, and may merely exemplify the late Jewish habit of attributing every highly esteemed piece of writing to some ancient worthy. Some scholars, however, think that the title originally indicated, not the authorship of the psalm, but the musical setting to which it was sung.

Meanwhile Rome, the republic of slave-owners and usurers, was pushing eastward. Her wars were systematically prosecuted slave-hunts; and her conquered provinces were ruthlessly exploited by the gangs of financiers who farmed her taxes. In 148 Macedonia was reduced to a Roman province. In 146 the last bid for liberty of the Greek city-States was crushed, Corinth destroyed, and its people sold into slavery. In the same year Carthage, the old rival of Rome in the West, was finally sacked and levelled to the ground. The whole Mediterranean world was becoming one vast field of extortion and exploitation. The shrunken Seleucid kingdom in Syria and the Ptolemaic kingdom in Egypt were now all that remained of the empire of Alexander the Great. They lived on only until Rome was ready to devour and digest them. Between them the little Jewish State enjoyed a precarious independence until the new hour of doom should strike.

CHAPTER VI

ROME CONQUERS THE EAST

THE reign of John Hyrcanus (135–105 B.C.) marked the zenith of the Hasmonæan family's fortunes. At the opening of the reign Antiochus VII made a temporarily successful effort to recover Judæa for the Seleucid dynasty. But in 128 Antiochus fell fighting against the Parthians, and Hyrcanus, with Roman diplomacy at his back, reasserted his independence. In the course of his reign he reduced the Edomites or Idumæans, forced them to accept Judaism on pain of deportation, conquered Samaria and Galilee, and destroyed the Samaritan temple on Gerizim (109).

Some authorities think that six chapters of Isaiah, xxiv–xxvii and xxxiv–xxxv, date from the reign of Hyrcanus. If so, they are the latest piece of writing in the Old Testament. They are, by general consent, later than the rest of the Book of Isaiah, and were evidently written in a time of general war from which Jewish patriots hoped to reap advantage for their nation. The party of the Pharisees were at first enthusiastic supporters of Hyrcanus. To them must be attributed not only the above chapters of Isaiah, if written then, but the apocryphal book known as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, in which—under the pretence of recounting the last words of the twelve sons of Jacob—the author “foretells” the advent of a prophet, priest, and king (Hyrcanus) who will establish the reign of righteousness on earth. This work has

suffered interpolation by later Pharisees who took a less rosy view of the Hasmonæan dynasty than did the original author, and by Christians who applied its "prophecies" to Christ. To the reign of Hyrcanus also belongs another apocryphal work, the Book of Jubilees, in which a Pharisaic author retells the story of Genesis in the light of his own beliefs. The author believes that the Mosaic law existed from the creation, that angels are circumcised, and that in the Utopia soon to be inaugurated physical nature will be transformed and human life extended to a thousand years. He believes in the immortality of the souls of the righteous, but not in the resurrection of their bodies.

Hyrcanus proved a great disappointment. His object was not to inaugurate Utopia, but to carve out a kingdom for himself; and as he employed a standing army of mercenaries and could dispense with popular support, he made no bones about saying so. The result was a breach between the Hasmonæan dynasty and the Pharisees. The son of Hyrcanus, Aristobulus I (105-103), took the title of king and was known as "the friend of the Greeks." Under his brother and successor, Alexander Jannæus, the breach with the popular party developed into open war. In 88 an unsuccessful revolt was followed by the crucifixion of eight hundred Pharisees and the flight of eight thousand to Egypt. On the death of Alexander, his widow, Alexandra, fell under the influence of the Pharisees, and reforms were introduced softening the administration of the penal code and improving the position of women. This golden age, as later Jewish tradition regarded it, was short-lived. On the death

of Alexandra in 69 civil war broke out between her two sons and the kingdom fell into anarchy.

As the day of deliverance from oppression receded further from the world of actuality, the Jewish people sought refuge more and more in wish-fulfilling myths. Either under Alexander Jannæus or in the troubled years following the death of his widow a new prophecy was added to the apocalyptic Book of Enoch. The author looks for the coming of the kingdom of God, but not by human agency. A supernatural personage variously referred to as "the elect one," "the Son of Man," or "the Anointed" (Hebrew *Mashiah*, commonly transliterated "Messiah"; Greek *Christos*), chosen by God before the beginning of days, will put down the mighty from their seat, banish wrong-doing from the earth, and judge all according to their deeds. Kings and rulers will cry for mercy, but find none: they will be delivered to the angels to be tortured in Gehenna for their oppression of God's children. The righteous will be clothed in garments of glory and live for ever with the Son of Man in his kingdom.

World events paid no heed to such dreams. Rome, after a period of weakness due to internal class struggles, was ready to take another stride to the east. In 88 Mithridates VI, king of a Persian dynasty established in Pontus, profited by Rome's distractions to overrun Asia Minor, massacre the Roman tax-farmers, money-lenders, and merchants resident in Asia, and even invade European Greece, where he was welcomed as a deliverer from Roman rule. He was beaten back into Pontus by the Roman legions, but renewed the war, and at the end of twenty years was still unconquered. At the same time the son-in-law

of Mithridates, Tigranes of Armenia, carved himself out an empire in Mesopotamia and Syria at the expense of the Parthians and Seleucids. In 66 the Roman general Pompey was appointed commander-in-chief of the armies operating against the two Oriental monarchs, and completely defeated both. Tigranes surrendered, Mithridates fled, and Syria became a Roman province. In 63 the two rival claimants to the Jewish throne, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, appealed to Pompey for support. The Jewish people wanted neither of them, and sent an embassy in that sense to Pompey. The Roman decided in favour of Hyrcanus. The party of Aristobulus threw themselves into Jerusalem and held out for three months in the temple. Pompey finally stormed the place with a slaughter of twelve thousand Jews, installed Hyrcanus as high priest without the title of king, imposed a tribute, and carried off Aristobulus and a train of Jewish prisoners to Rome to adorn his triumph.

The government of Rome, though nominally republican, was in the hands of an exclusive plutocracy who monopolized office, filled the senate, and battened on the ruthless exploitation of the vast Mediterranean empire which had been won for them by the valour of their legions. The conquest of Greece and the East flooded the slave market: it is estimated that slaves numbered at this time three-fourths of the inhabitants of the Roman world. The land of Italy and Sicily was cultivated by slave gangs, who from time to time broke out into formidable revolts and were put down with savage cruelty. Free peasants, unable to compete with gang-labour, disappeared from the land and either joined the legions or drifted

to the cities and became a growing charge on the State. The land-hunger of discharged soldiers and expropriated peasants intensified the class struggle in Italy, gave a new impetus to Roman imperialism, and provided victorious generals with a standing excuse for riding roughshod over the greedy and incapable senatorial plutocracy. Pompey, on his return from the East in 61, finding himself faced with the usual obstruction from the senate, allied himself with the millionaire Crassus and the popular leader Cæsar in order to force through his measures. For seven years the triumvirate, supported by the Italian middle class and the legionaries, dictated the policy of Rome.

During these years the puppet high priest Hyrcanus and his right-hand man, Antipater the Idumæan, ruled Judæa as Roman agents and with Roman protection. Attempts by Aristobulus and his sons, who had escaped from Rome, to raise rebellion provided Gabinius, the proconsul of Syria, with a reason for tightening the Roman hold on Palestine. In 54 Crassus succeeded Gabinius in Syria and plundered the temple at Jerusalem in order to finance his forthcoming campaign against the Parthians. In 53 he and his army were annihilated by the Parthians at Carrhae in Mesopotamia. His lieutenant Cassius saved Syria for the Romans, suppressed another rebellion in Palestine, and sold thirty thousand Jews into slavery (51).

The death of Crassus broke up the triumvirate. In 49 civil war broke out between Pompey, who had become reconciled to the senate, and Cæsar, now the conqueror of Gaul and the idol of his legionaries. Pompey abandoned Italy to Cæsar and sought sup-

port in the East, but in 48 was decisively beaten at Pharsalus in Thessaly and fled to Egypt, only to be murdered as he landed at Alexandria. Antipater and Hyrcanus hastened to attach themselves to Cæsar, who confirmed Hyrcanus in his high priestly office and granted Antipater Roman citizenship and the office of procurator of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee. Cæsar further remitted the tribute imposed by Pompey, gave permission for the re-fortification of Jerusalem, and showed himself a protector of the Jews in Palestine and elsewhere.

The attitude of the Jewish people to these events is reflected in the so-called Psalms of Solomon, written by Pharisaic authors about this time for use in the synagogues. They denounce the usurpation of the throne of David and the high priesthood by the wicked Hasmonæan family. A conqueror (Pompey) has come from the ends of the earth, seized Jerusalem, cast down its walls, shed the blood of its people like water, and carried its sons and daughters captive to the West. But the conqueror in his turn meets with shameful death on the shores of Egypt: his dead body lies unburied on the waves. So perish all who oppress the righteous and profane the sanctuary! Soon God will raise up a king, the son of David, who will crush unjust rulers, purge Jerusalem of the heathen who trample it underfoot, and reign over the earth as the Lord's anointed. It will be seen that the Messiah here is a mortal man, not a supernatural being as in the Book of Enoch. Unlike the authors of Enoch and Daniel, the authors of these Psalms do not expect a resurrection of the dead; but they believe in the immortality of righteous souls. The Psalms of Solo-

mon seem to have been too topical to live long. Jewish copyists ceased to transcribe them, and they survive to-day only in a Greek translation.

By this time nearly every great city in the Mediterranean world had its Jewish colony, consisting partly of the descendants of captives taken in war, partly of Jews who had migrated there to better their position. The prosperity and importance of the Jewish colony at Alexandria have already been mentioned. Not only Alexandria, but Antioch, Cyrene, Sardis, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome itself had now their Jewish communities, organized in synagogues and subscribing money annually for the upkeep of the temple at Jerusalem. The number of Jews in Rome may be gathered from an incident that occurred in 58 B.C. Flaccus, a former proconsul of Asia, was accused of seizing some of this Jewish money, and was defended by Cicero, who took occasion to attack the Jews. There were enough of them in the crowd to howl the orator down.

Most of these Jews of the "dispersion," as they were called, were in humble walks of life—petty traders, freedmen, or slaves. They spoke Greek as the common language of Mediterranean civilization: the better educated among them read Greek literature. But between them and Græco-Roman society there was a social, political, and religious gulf. To them Hellenism was the culture of the masters, the exploiters, the unrighteous. Like their brethren in Palestine, the Jews of the dispersion looked for a turning of the tables on the oppressor; but they pinned less faith to insurrection and more to permeation of the Gentile underworld. Their situation brought them into contact with other uprooted and unhappy

people like themselves, to whom the official religions of the Mediterranean world had become meaningless and whom philosophy could not reach or satisfy. Such people were attracted to Judaism as a religion which refused to be identified with any of the official cults of their oppressors, and which seemed by its Messianic promises to provide an escape from the difficulties of life. Many became proselytes and added considerably to the numerical strength of the Jews. Specimens of the propaganda circulated by Jews of the dispersion are found in the Sibylline Oracles—a collection of prophetic writings composed in Greek hexameter verse, in imitation of the Sibylline books esteemed by the Greeks and Romans. The Sibylline Oracles, like the Jewish apocalyptic books, deal in quasi-prophetic style with contemporary politics, and predict the downfall of empires and the advent of a reign of justice on earth. They range in date from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D., and contain more Christian matter than Jewish.

Another literary product of the Jewish dispersion in the last century B.C. is the apocryphal book known as the Wisdom of Solomon. The author is an Alexandrian Jew, influenced by Greek philosophy, and has much in common with the Stoics. But he inveighs against Greek civilization and against those Jews who, like the Sadducees and the author of Ecclesiastes, manage to be on easy terms with it. Such men, says the author of Wisdom, profess a hedonist philosophy:—

“Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and perfumes;

And let no flower of spring pass us by:

Let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they
be withered:

Let none of us go without his share in our proud
revelry:

Everywhere let us leave tokens of mirth:

Because this is our portion, and our lot is this."

They oppress the poor, condemn the righteous to a
shameful death, and think that is the end of the matter.
The author may have in mind the Hasmonæan perse-
cution of the Pharisees.¹ But, he continues, the
Sadducees are wrong:—

"The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
And no torment shall touch them.

In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died;

And their departure was accounted hurt,

And their journeying away from us ruin:

But they are in peace.

For even if in the sight of men they be punished,

Their hope is full of immortality;

And having borne a little chastening, they shall
receive great good;

Because God made trial of them, and found them
worthy of himself . . .

They shall judge nations, and have dominion over
peoples;

And the Lord shall reign over them for ever-
more."

In the day of retribution the ungodly will curse their
folly. So let kings and rulers take heed in time:—

"A stern judgment befalleth them that be in high
place:

¹ The significance of the allusion depends on the date of the
book. Some put it as early as the Maccabean persecution,
others as late as the reign of Herod, others between the two.
I have assumed the date to be not far from 50 B.C.

For the man of low estate may be pardoned in
mercy,
But mighty men shall be searched out mightily."

In vi, 12-ix the author develops that conception of the divine wisdom which we first noted in the Book of Proverbs. Wisdom is personified and treated as the "artificer of all things," the mediator between God and man, and the inspirer of human virtue.

"She is fairer than the sun,
And above all the constellations of the stars:
Being compared with light, she is found before it;
For to the light succeedeth night,
But against wisdom evil doth not prevail;
But she reacheth from one end of the world to the
other with full strength,
And ordereth all things graciously."

Chapters x-xix illustrate the work of the divine wisdom from the Pentateuchal narratives, with long and laboured asides against the idolatry and immorality of the pagan world. The style is pedestrian and prosy, and many consider this part of the work to be by another hand.

We must now turn back for a little to contemporary events in the world drama. The dictatorship of Cæsar represented the overthrow of the Roman governing class, who had hitherto exploited the Empire for their exclusive benefit, by the Italian middle class and peasantry who manned Rome's legions and fought her wars. The effect was to stabilize Roman imperialism by broadening its basis. Cæsar extended Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the Italian peninsula, promoted old soldiers, sons of freedmen, and even Gauls to the senate, and lightened the

financial burdens of the provinces. He thus paved the way for the later imperial policy by which well-to-do provincials were led to think of themselves as Romans and to identify their interests with those of their conquerors. The old ruling class avenged themselves by killing him in the senate on the Ides of March, 44 B.C. Suetonius tells us that his death was mourned by the Roman *plebs*, by resident aliens, and above all by the Jews of Rome, who for several successive nights made pilgrimage to his place of burial.

The assassination of Cæsar could not undo his work, or restore power to a ruling class which had been proved redundant and useless. The legions had learnt their strength, and looked for leaders who would avenge Cæsar's death and continue his policy. While Cæsar's principal lieutenant, Antony, and his adopted son and heir, Octavian, manœuvred for power in Italy, Cassius, the prime mover in the conspiracy, left for Syria to raise money and men to fight both. A heavy contribution was laid on the Jews, and four cities of Palestine were sold into slavery in default of payment. In 43 Antipater, who had helped Cassius to raise this money, was poisoned, and his son Herod stepped into his shoes as virtual ruler of Palestine in the Roman interest. Meanwhile in Italy Antony and Octavian came to terms, formed a triumvirate with Lepidus, and with Cæsar's veteran troops at their back massacred over two thousand of the Roman plutocracy. In 42 the battle of Philippi and the suicide of Brutus and Cassius made the triumvirate masters of the Roman world. Herod immediately transferred his support to the conquerors, and in 41 received from Antony the title of tetrarch. In 40 the Parthians,

profiting by the Roman civil wars, invaded Syria and Palestine, plundered Jerusalem, and restored Antigonus, son of Aristobulus the Hasmonæan, to the throne of his fathers. Herod escaped to Rome and threw himself on the goodwill of the triumvirate. In 38 the Romans recovered Syria; and in 37 Herod with their help recaptured Jerusalem. Antigonus was beheaded, and Herod reigned over Judæa as a client-king of the Roman Empire.

The Roman revolution had now spent itself. The legionaries were appeased by distributions of land and money. The Italian middle class, having enriched themselves at the expense of the Roman plutocracy, looked for a saviour of society who would consolidate their gains and put an end to social upheaval and to the ever-present danger of a slave revolt. They found their man in Octavian. Lepidus was ejected from the triumvirate in 36. Antony, to whom the eastern provinces had been assigned, offended Roman opinion by his liaison with Cleopatra, heiress of the Ptolemies, and his disposal in her favour of kingdoms and provinces which the Romans regarded as theirs to exploit. In 32 Rome declared war against Egypt. In 31 Octavian defeated Antony and Cleopatra at Actium on the coast of Greece. In 30 the war was terminated by the suicide of the pair at Alexandria, and the Ptolemaic kingdom was added to the Roman Empire. Herod had immediately after Actium transferred his allegiance from Antony to Octavian, who rewarded him by extending his domain to the whole of Palestine. Octavian returned to Rome to celebrate his triumph, to resign his triumviral powers, and to be rewarded by a grateful senate with the position of

commander-in-chief (*imperator*) of all the Roman armies and the solemn title of Augustus, by which he is known to history. Republican in form, the government of Rome had become in substance a military dictatorship in many respects anticipatory of modern Fascism.

In the government of Palestine Herod acted as a capable servant of Augustus, who reposed in him an implicit trust. Herod's policy was to assimilate Palestine to the rest of the Empire by introducing Græco-Roman institutions as rapidly as could be done without provoking popular commotion. While in Judæa he passed as an orthodox Jew, in the Greek world he was known as a bountiful patron of Hellenic culture. He rebuilt Samaria as a Greek city, naming it Sebaste in honour of Augustus, built the city and harbour of Cæsarea, erected temples to the emperor in both those cities, and provided a theatre and other Greek amenities at Jerusalem, Cæsarea, and Jericho. At the same time he conciliated Jewish opinion by remitting taxation and by rebuilding, enlarging, and beautifying the temple at Jerusalem. As a result the Pharisees accepted his government with a resignation which they had seldom shown under the Hasmonæans. Such leaders of the party as Hillel put their Messianic hopes into cold storage, and concentrated on the business of explaining away the more Utopian provisions of the Pentateuchal law¹ and propagating a harmless and pacific monotheism.

This tendency is illustrated in the apocryphal Book

¹ E.g., the provision requiring the remission of debts between Jews once in seven years was evaded by allowing the parties to "contract out."

of Tobit. That little novel, with its ethical "uplift" and its naïve beliefs, Persian in origin, on the subject of angels and devils, is an epitome of the Pharisaic teaching popular in the time of Herod. Stress is laid on the observance of the ceremonial law and the duty of almsgiving and just dealing. The golden rule—"What thou thyself hatest, do to no man" (iv, 15)—formed part of the teaching of Hillel, who went so far as to add: "This is the whole law, all else is but its exposition." The story is free from any belligerent tone towards foreign nations and contains no Messianic reference. The scene is laid in Assyria in the period following the destruction of the kingdom of Samaria. Tobit, a captive Israelite, distinguished for piety and benevolence, has the misfortune to lose his sight. He sends his son, Tobias, to Media to recover ten talents of silver deposited with a fellow Israelite there. Seeking an attendant to accompany him, Tobias meets the angel Raphael, who in disguise volunteers to guide him to his destination. Arriving in Media, the pair lodge with a kinsman of Tobit and Tobias, named Raguel. This man has a daughter, Sarah, who has been given in marriage to seven husbands, but none of whose marriages has been consummated, since each bridegroom has been strangled on the wedding night by the demon Asmodæus (Aeshma Daeva, in Persian mythology, one of the evil spirits attendant on Angra Mainyu). On the advice of the disguised Raphael, Tobias applies for Sarah's hand, and puts the demon to flight by smoking him out with the heart and liver of a fish caught in the river Tigris. He then recovers the money, returns to Nineveh with his bride, and restores his father's sight

by anointing his eyes with the gall of the fish. Raphael, offered half the money as a reward for his services, reveals his identity and vanishes. The story concludes with a prophecy by the dying Tobit of the future fortunes of Israel, culminating in the rebuilding of the temple by Herod—an allusion which helps to date the book—and the conversion of all nations to Judaism.

Towards the end of Herod's reign there were visible rifts in the lute. The Pharisees, though passively loyal, refused to take an oath of allegiance to Rome and Herod. He fined them; they prophesied doom to his house; and he reverted to the Hasmonæan policy of persecution. Many Pharisees were put to death. Eighty of them tore down a golden eagle which Herod had placed over the gate of the temple, and were burnt alive. His severities to his own family, including the execution of three sons in three years, led Augustus to remark that it was better to be Herod's pig than Herod's son. On his death in 4 B.C. his elements of greatness were soon forgotten; and the Jewish people remembered only the Idumæan adventurer, the servant of Rome, the persecuting tyrant, and the domestic murderer.

When Herod died, the disposal of the client-kingdom of Palestine lay with the emperor. While Herod's eldest surviving son, Archelaus, went to Rome to submit his claims to Augustus, the Jews made a determined effort to get rid of the Herodian dynasty altogether. A deputation was sent to Rome to request the abolition of the monarchy and the restoration of high-priestly government under Roman protection. The more militant patriots went further than this and made a bid for independence. Insur-

rection broke out in different parts of Palestine under such revolutionary leaders as Judas of Galilee, a former slave of Herod named Simon, and a shepherd named Athronges. The rebellion was crushed by Varus, the governor of Syria; Simon and Athronges perished; and thousands of insurgents, including four brothers of Athronges, were crucified. Augustus divided Palestine between three sons of Herod, giving Judæa, Idumæa, and Samaria to Archelaus, Galilee and Peræa to Antipas, and certain north-eastern districts to Philip. None of the three was granted the royal title, Archelaus being known as "ethnarch" and the other two as "tetrarchs."¹ In A.D. 6, on a joint complaint by Jews and Samaritans, Archelaus was deposed, and his domain transferred to a Roman procurator with headquarters at Cæsarea and under the general control of the governor of Syria.

Quirinius, the governor of Syria, immediately ordered a census in the new province with a view to its assessment for imperial taxation. The result was another rebellion. Judas of Galilee reappeared on the scene and, together with a Pharisee named Sadduk, proclaimed that God alone was ruler and lord and that to pay taxes to a foreigner was a sin. We do not know what happened to Judas or Sadduk. But their followers, the Zealots, made great headway among the masses and provided the spearhead of resistance to Rome as long as Rome could be resisted.

Henceforward the Pharisees, the old Jewish popular

¹ "Ethnarch"—ruler of a nation, "tetrarch"—ruler of a fourth part, were titles often conferred on client-princes of the Macedonian and Roman Empires. "Tetrarch" in course of time lost its precise sense and came to mean merely the ruler of a small district.

party, were irrevocably split between those who were content to wait passively for the kingdom of God and those who were prepared to take action to hasten it. The former view finds expression in an apocalyptic book known as the Assumption of Moses, written not long after A.D. 7. The author puts into the mouth of Moses a prophecy of the fortunes of Israel down to the troubles following the death of Herod. Then God will intervene on behalf of his people: he alone will set up his kingdom and consign the enemies of Israel to Gehenna. Such views were likely to appeal to pious Jews of the middle class, who hated the Romans and the Sadducean aristocracy, but hated disturbance more. The Zealot view was likely to find more favour with peasants for whom life at the best was a hard bargain, and for whom the attentions of the Roman tax-collector and his native hangers-on were the last straw. The populace waited confidently for the Messiah, the anointed king who would overthrow their Roman and native exploiters and usher in the golden age. The Messiah might be born of woman, or he might be some legendary hero of the past come again (Joshua for instance), or he might be a wholly supernatural being from heaven: it was all one, so long as he delivered his people.

The Romans, like the Seleucids before them, soon reached the conclusion that Jewish religion was nothing but a mask for sedition. With the Hellenized aristocracy and the princes of the Herodian dynasty an understanding was possible; but between the Pharisee who expected the divine overthrow of the Empire, and the Zealot who hoped to take a hand in it himself, there was from a Roman point of view little to choose.

The Government was particularly alarmed at the permeation of the Mediterranean underworld by Jewish proselytism. In A.D. 19, under the emperor Tiberius, the senate expelled all Jews from Italy and sent four thousand freedmen, who had become proselytes to Judaism or to the worship of Isis, to Sardinia to fight brigands—"a cheap sacrifice," says Tacitus, "should they die from the pestilential climate."

The spread of Jewish propaganda among the disinherited classes of the Roman Empire had indirect as well as direct results. Many, even among the disinherited, fought shy of becoming proselytes to Judaism. To them, indeed, as to the Jews, the Græco-Roman world seemed dark and evil. To them, as to the Jews, it was plain that the gods of such a world must be malevolent demons delighting in cruelty, terror, and death. But to them it was plain that no human power could alter it. Revolts against Rome had produced nothing but a crop of crucifixions. Judaism, with its revolutionary politics, its belligerent God, its rite of circumcision, its sabbaths and taboos, and its promise of an earthly millennium, repelled them. They gave up the material world as irretrievably evil, and dreamed of a saviour-god who, after suffering all that could be inflicted by the demon-rulers of this world, would destroy them and reward his worshippers with eternal life.

It was an old dream. Such a saviour-god was Osiris, who in the Egyptian myth was killed and cut to pieces, but rose again and reigned for ever as king and judge of the dead. Such was Dionysus, who in the Greek mysteries was torn to pieces by the Titans, but lived again, lord of the world of souls, and en-

dowed his worshippers with new life. Such was Mithra, the Iranian god of light, giver of life and protector of the faithful in this world and the next. These deities were all originally nature-gods, spirits of the corn and of the wild and of the unconquered sun. Their myths and rituals represented primarily the annual cycle of nature, and were associated only in a secondary sense with the idea of individual survival. But to the uprooted, unhappy people of the Mediterranean cities nature was alien and evil. Many found consolation in the worship of Osiris and Isis, or of Mithra; but to others, influenced by contact with Jews of the dispersion, Osiris and Mithra, too, were demons—fraudulent impersonations of the great deliverer whom they needed.

A theoretical justification of this need was provided in the first half of the first century A.D. by Philo of Alexandria. Philo, a wealthy Greek-speaking Jew, completely detached from the national struggles of his people, attempted to restate Judaism in terms of Greek metaphysics and to recommend it to the educated public of the Græco-Roman world as the sum total of all true philosophy. He derived his doctrines chiefly from Plato and the Stoics. Now Plato was essentially the philosopher of a slave-owning class, who despised mechanical occupations and believed in keeping the masses in their place by lies. For him the concrete world, in which most people had to labour, was an illusion, and the abstract world of "ideas" or forms of thought, which philosophers alone had time to contemplate, was the only reality. The Stoics had a wider appeal. They preached cosmopolitanism and the brotherhood of man, and, far

from denying the material world, regarded all its processes as manifestations of divine reason. Philo's philosophy is a compromise between Platonism, Stoicism, and Hebrew tradition. In order to square the folk-lore of the Old Testament with Greek metaphysics, he resorts to allegorical interpretation. Jahveh is transformed into the Absolute of the philosophers, the angels into Platonic ideas, the patriarchs into types of virtue, and their adventures into vicissitudes of the soul. The word of God, by which in Gen. i all things are made, is identified by Philo with the divine reason of the Stoics (*logos* in Greek meaning both "word" and "reason") and with the highest of the Platonic ideas, called by Plato "the idea of the good." We have seen how in such writings as the Book of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon "wisdom" is personified and represented as partner with God in the creation of the world. In a similar way Philo personifies the *logos*, which he calls the "image of God," the "only-begotten son of God," a "second God," and the mediator between God and man. Following Plato, Philo teaches that the knowledge and virtue derived from the divine *logos* enable man to escape from the prison of the material world to eternal life and union with God.

Philo's metaphysics could hardly be expected to appeal to any but the leisured and studious. But his allegorical interpretation of scripture, his personification of the *logos*, and his doctrine of redemption had a wider vogue. Assimilated at first or second hand, they provided religious escapists of the kind we have described with the very thing they wanted. To the Jewish patriot who said that the Messiah (in Greek

Christos), a second Joshua (Greek *Iesous*), would soon come to redeem the world from Roman oppression, the Philonian could reply that *Christos Iesous* would indeed redeem the world—not by violence, however, but by revealing to mankind the true God, of whom he was the only-begotten son. There is no reason to think that these Gnostics, as they later came to be called (from the Greek *gnosis*, “knowledge”), as yet connected their saviour-god with any Messiah crucified by the Romans. Messianism and Gnosticism arose as two independent streams. The history of primitive Christianity is the history of their encounter and fusion.

INDEX

- AARON, 1, 54
 Abiram, 54 n.
 Abraham, 1, 6, 9, 26, 53
 Aocad, 38
 Actium (battle), 108
 Adam, 1, 40, 53
 Adapa, 40
 Aeschylus, 5, 63
 Ahab, 14, 20
 Ahaz, 24-26
 Ahura Mazda, 45, 47
 Akhenaten, 34
 Alexander Balas, 90, 91 n.
 Alexander Jannaeus, 98-99
 Alexander the Great, 60, 64, 74, 86-88, 96
 Alexandra, 98-99
 Alexandria, 61, 64, 68, 71, 80, 102-104, 108, 115
 Amos, 22-24, 26
 Angra Mainyu, 45, 65, 89, 110
 Antigonus (Hasmonean), 108
 Antigonus (Macedonian), 64
 Antioch, 68, 74, 103
 Antiochus III, 74-75
 Antiochus IV, 79-81, 83, 86-88, 90, 91 n.
 Antiochus VII, 97
 Antipas, 113
 Antipater, 101-102, 107
 Antony, Mark, 107-108
 Arabia, 8, 10, 28
 Aramaeans, 8
 Archelaus, 111-113
 Aristobulus I, 98
 Aristobulus II, 100-101, 103
 Artaxerxes I, 51 n., 55-56
 Artaxerxes III, 60
 Aryans, 30, 45
 Asaph, 96
 Asia Minor, 9, 44, 55, 60, 74, 83
 Asmodæus, 110
 Assumption of Moses, 113
 Assurbanipal, 30
 Assyria, 2-4, 13-14, 22, 24-26, 28-30, 35, 37-38, 49, 61, 110
 Astarte, 10
 Aten, 34
 Athens, 55
 Athronges, 112
 Augustus (Octavian), 107-109, 111-112
 Baalim, 11, 19
 Babel, 21
 Babylonia, 2-4, 8, 18, 28-29, 34-41, 44, 46, 49, 53, 58, 60, 62, 64, 76, 86-87
 Belshazzar, 87
 Bethlehem, 1
 Bildad, 65
 Cæsar, Julius, 101-102, 106-107
 Cæsarea, 109, 112
 Cain, 21
 Cambyases, 50
 Canaanites, 10, 15, 32
 Carchemish (battle), 35
 Carrhae (battle), 101
 Carthage, 74, 96
 Cassius, 101, 107
 Chaeronea (battle), 60
 Chaldeans, 8, 28, 35-37
 Chernosh, 14
 Cherubim, 11
 Christ, 1, 25, 52, 73, 98-99, 117
 Christians, 1, 25, 46, 52, 73, 81 n., 98, 104, 117
 Chronicles, 11, 37 n., 59 n., 67
 Cicero, 103
 Cleopatra, 108
 Corinth, 96, 103
 Crassus, 161
 Cyrene, 103
 Cyrus, 44, 46-50, 55, 87
 D (source), 3, 43, 54
 Damascus, 22, 24-25
 Daniel, 41, 79 n., 85-90, 93, 103
 Darius I, 50-51, 55
 Dathan, 54 n.
 David, 1, 12-15, 58-59, 67, 70, 96, 102
 Deborah, Song of, 15-17, 21, 83
 Demetrius I, 90, 91 n.
 Demetrius II, 90
 Democritus, 63
 Deuteronomy, 3, 31-34, 40-41, 43, 44, 57-58, 71, 80
 Dionysus, 114
 E (source), 3, 25, 43, 53-55
 Ea, 39-40
 Ecclesiastes, 91-92, 104
 Ecclesiasticus, 56, 71-73
 Eden, 21, 40, 53
 Edom, 51, 97
 Egypt, 2-5, 7-9, 14, 18, 21, 26, 29, 34-37, 42, 44, 50, 53 n., 56-58, 58, 60, 62, 64, 68, 74, 79-82, 84, 96, 98, 102, 108, 114
 Elamites, 76
 Elephantine, 58
 Elibu, 66-67
 Elijah, 19-20, 22, 29
 Eliphaz, 65
 Elisha, 20, 22, 29
 Enoch, 89-90, 93, 99, 102
 Ephesus, 103
 Erech, 39
 Eridu, 38-39
 Esarhaddon, 30
 Esau, 53
 Essenes, 94
 Esther, 75-76
 Ethan, 96
 Euripides, 63, 67
 Eve, 1
 Evil-Merodach, 43
 Exodus, 3, 32, 40-41, 53
 Ezekiel, 42-43, 54, 61, 86
 Ezra, 49, 51 n., 56-58, 67, 71
 Flaccus, 103

- Gabinus, 101
 Gabriel, 87
 Galilee, 97, 102, 119
 Gaugamela (battle), 61
 Gaul, 101
 Gaumata, 50
 Gaza, 60
 Gehenna, 90, 99, 113
Genesis, 3-4, 11, 21, 32 n., 39-40, 53, 70, 98, 116
 Gerizim, 57, 81, 97
 Gnostics, 117
 Greeks, 1, 30, 44, 55-56, 60-64, 67-68, 70, 75-78, 80, 87-88, 96, 98, 104, 109, 115
 H (source), 43
Habakkuk, 35
Haggai, 49-50
Hallel, 84
 Haman, 75-78
 Hammurabi, 38, 40
 Hasidim, 82, 84, 86, 93-94
 Hasmoneans, 91 n., 93-94, 95 n., 97-98, 102, 105, 108-109, 111
 Hebrews, 8-10, 15, 21, 26
 Heliodorus, 75
 Heman, 96
 Herod, 105 n., 107-113
 Herodotus, 29, 45, 53 n.
 Hesiod, 9, 62
 Hezekiah, 26, 28-30
 Hilkiab, 31, 33
 Hillel, 109-110
 Homer, 9, 62
 Horeb, 20, 31
Hessa, 22, 24
 Hoshea, 25
 Huldah, 31
 Hyksos, 8
 Hyrcania, 60
 Hyrcanus I, 97-98
 Hyrcanus II, 100-102
 Idumaeans, 97, 101, 111-112
 Isaac, 1, 9, 26
Isaiah, 24-29, 46-48, 51-52, 62, 97
 Ishmael, 53
 Ishtar, 39, 76
 Isis, 114-115
 Israel, 8-10, 12-16, 19, 21-25, 31-33, 37, 42-43, 47-48, 53, 57, 110-111
 Issus (battle), 60
 Italy, 68, 74, 100-101, 106-108, 114
 J (source), 3, 21, 25, 40, 43, 53-55
 Jacob, 1, 9, 26, 53, 97
 Jabveh, 3, 10-12, 14, 16-21, 23, 25-26, 28-36, 42-43, 46-48, 50-51, 53-54, 57-58, 63, 66-67, 69, 77-78, 81, 89, 94-95, 116
Jasher, 15
 Jehoahaz, 35
 Jehoiachin, 36, 43
 Jehoiahim, 35-36
 Jehu, 14, 22
 Jeremiah, 80-81, 34-37, 42
 Jericho, 109
 Jerusalem, 13, 26, 28-29, 31, 33-34, 36-37, 41-42, 48-49, 51, 55-59, 64, 67, 70, 75-77, 79-84, 88, 90, 91 n., 93, 95, 100-103, 109-109
 Jeshua ben-Sira, 70-73
 Jesus, 1, 117
 Jews, 1, 14, 28-29, 32, 35-39, 41-43, 48, 49-52, 55-60, 63, 68, 74-77, 79-81, 88-90, 93, 100-104, 107, 109, 111-115
Job, 59 n., 64-67, 86, 89
Joel, 60
Jonah, 59
 Jonathan Maccabaeus, 90, 91 n.
 Joseph, 1, 26
 Josephus, 57 n., 60, 79 n.
Joshua, 10, 15, 64
 Josiah, 31, 35-36
Jubilees, 98
 Judah, Judaea, 13-15, 16 n., 21, 24-26, 28, 30-31, 36-37, 42, 51, 80, 90, 97, 101-102, 108-109, 112
 Judaism, 32, 46, 57-58, 81 n., 86-87, 89, 93, 97, 104, 111, 114-115
 Judas Maccabaeus, 91, 83, 90, 98
 Judas of Galilee, 113
Judges, 9, 11, 16, 43
 Karkar (battle), 14
Kings, 11-15, 20-22, 29, 31, 43, 49, 58, 67
 Korah, 54
Lamentations, 37 n.
 Leontopolis, 81
 Lepidus, 107-108
 Levites, 18, 33, 43, 54
Leviticus, 43, 58
Logos, 116
 Lydia, 44
1 Maccabees, 79 n., 83
2 Maccabees, 56, 75, 79 n.
 Macedonia, 60, 64, 74, 76 n., 86-87, 96, 112 n.
 Magi, 44-45, 50
Malachi, 51, 58-59
 Manasseh, 30
 Marduk, 39-40, 49, 76
 Medes, 30, 35, 38, 44, 83, 86-87
 Megabyzus, 55
 Megiddo (battle), 35
 Melchizedek, 95
 Menahem, 24
 Meroptah, 9
 Merodach Baladan, 28
 Mesha, 14
 Mesopotamia, 7-8, 14, 38, 100-101
 Messiah, 99, 102, 104, 109-110, 113, 116-117
Micah, 26, 28
 Michael, 88
 Mithra, 45, 49, 115
 Mithridates VI, 99-100
 Moab, 13-14
 Mordecai, 76

- Moses, 1-3, 26, 31, 33, 45, 53-54, 56,
 59, 69, 76, 96, 113
 Nabonidus, 44, 49, 87
 Naboth, 20
Nahum, 35
 Nebuchadnezzar, 35-36, 39, 41-42,
 44, 57, 86-87
 Necho, 35
Nehemiah, 49, 56-59, 67, 71
 Nimrod, 40
 Nineveh, 35, 39, 59, 110
 Nippur, 38
 Noah, 1, 40, 53, 89
Numbers, 16, 53-54
Obadiah, 51
 Omri, 13-14, 19, 22
 Onias, 81
 Osiris, 114-115
 P (source), 3, 32 n., 39, 53-55
 Palestine, 8-9, 15, 19, 21-22, 28-30,
 35, 43, 49, 55, 57-58, 64, 68, 73-75,
 95, 101-103, 107-109, 111-112
 Parthians, 83, 91, 97, 100-101, 107
 Pekah, 24
Pentateuch, 2-3, 9, 21, 25, 54, 56-57,
 59, 68-69, 77, 81, 93-94, 106, 109
 Persepolis, 61
 Persians, 44-47, 50, 55-56, 80-81, 64,
 75-76, 83, 86-87, 110
 Pharaohs, 8-9, 50
 Pharisees, 93-94, 97-98, 102, 105, 109-
 113
 Pharsalus (battle), 102
 Philip II of Macedon, 60
 Philip V of Macedon, 74
 Philip (tetrarch), 112
 Philippi (battle), 107
 Philistines, 9, 12
 Philo, 115-117
 Phoenicia, 9, 15, 20, 42, 53 n.
 Plataea (battle), 55
 Plato, 45, 63, 70, 115-116
 Pompey, 100-102
 Pontus, 99
Proverbs, 69-71, 106, 116
Psalms, 11, 59, 63, 77, 81-85, 94-96
 Ptolemaic Empire, 68, 74, 88, 96, 108
 Ptolemy I, 64
 Ptolemy II, 68
 Ptolemy VI, 79, 81
 Purim, 76
 Quirinius, 112
 Raguel, 110
 Raphael, 110-111
 Rezin, 24
 Rome, 1, 68, 74-75, 80, 81 n., 90, 96-97,
 99-101, 103, 106-109, 111-114, 117
Ruth, 59
 Sadducees, 93, 104-105, 113
 Sadduk, 112
 Salamis (battle), 55
 Samaria, 13-14, 25-26, 28, 31, 49, 57,
 69, 79-81, 97, 102, 109-110, 112
Samuel, 11-13, 15, 19, 21, 43, 58, 67
 Sanballat, 57
 Sarah (O.T.), 6
 Sarah (Apocrypha), 110
 Sardis, 103
 Sargon, 25, 28
 Satan, 65, 89
 Saul, 15
 Scythians, 30
 Sebaste, 109
 Selencid Empire, 74-76, 79, 81 n., 83,
 88-91, 93-94, 96-97, 100, 113
 Selencus I, 64, 68
 Seleucus IV, 75
 Semites, 8, 38
 Sennacherib, 28-30
Septuagint, 68-69
 Shalmaneser II, 14
 Shalmaneser IV, 25
Sibylline Oracles, 104
 Sidon, 42
 Simon Maccabaeus, 90, 94, 96
 Simon of Peraea, 112
 Sinai, 8, 21 n.
 Sisera, 15-16
 Smerdis, 50
 Solomon, 13, 15, 21, 67, 70, 73, 92, 96
Solomon (Psalms of), 102-103
 Son of Man, 99
Song of Songs, 73-74
 Stoics, 104, 115-116
 Suetonius, 107
 Sumerians, 8
 Susa, 44
 Syria, 8, 14, 23, 28, 30, 35, 55, 60, 64,
 68, 73, 96, 100-101, 107-108, 112
 Tacitus, 114
 Tammuz, 42
 Teraphim, 11-12
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, 97
 Thales, 63
 Thebes, 34
 Tiamat, 39
 Tiberius, 114
 Tiglath Pileser III, 24-25
 Tigranes, 100
 Tobias, 110
Tobit, 110-111
 Tyre, 43, 60
 Ur, 38
 Ut-Napishtim, 40
 Varus, 112
Wisdom of Solomon, 104-106, 116
 Xenophanes, 62-63
 Xerxes, 55, 75-78
 Zadokites, 43, 93, 95 n.
 Zealots, 112-113
Zechariah, 50, 79 n., 80
 Zedekiah, 36
Zend-Avesta, 45
Zephaniah, 30-31
 Zerubbabel, 60
 Zeus, 81, 88
 Zophar, 65
Zoroastrianism 45-47, 55, 89, 93 n.

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